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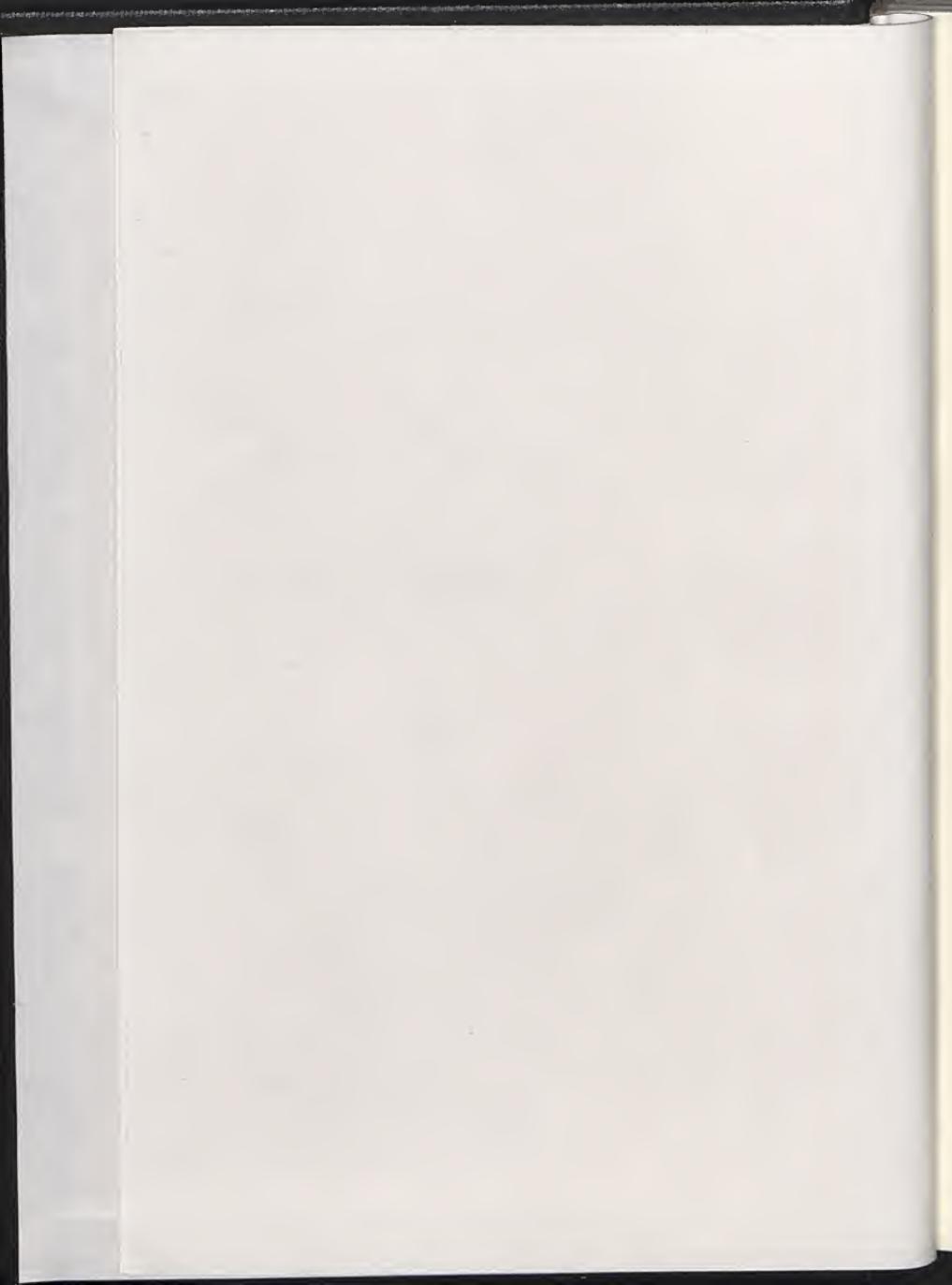


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The
Student

Fall 1983

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The Student

FALL 1983

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JAMES BROUGHTON: THE BRIGHT AND THE DARK DANCE TOGETHER ALWAYS

by Robert Gipe and Dennis Manning

James Broughton is a poet and avant-garde filmmaker from San Francisco, California, who came to Reynolda House for a poetry reading in September, 1983. He is responsible for twenty-four films and sixteen books of poetry. A native of the Far West, Broughton has traveled extensively, particularly in Southeast Asia. He has taught at the School of Creative Arts at San Francisco State University and is at present on the faculty of the San Francisco Art Institute. He was awarded Guggenheim Fellowships in 1971 and 1973 and received an individual grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1976. In 1975 he received Film Culture's Twelfth Independent Film Award for his work of the preceding thirty years. His recently published books of poetry include *Graffiti for the Johns of Heaven*, 1982, and *Ecstasies*, a collection of poems from 1975-1983. His poems from 1949-1969 are collected in *A Long Undressing*, published in 1971. At Reynolda House, Broughton also showed his 1968 film, *The Bed*, which was commissioned by the Royal Film Archive of Belgium.

STUDENT: Why does a California poet come to Winston-Salem?

BROUGHTON: I've been in Atlanta, and I'm on my way to New York, and Mr. Locklair of the music department has set some of my poems to music, and he wanted to meet me. And so he arranged this. I had nothing to do with it.

STUDENT: Had Mr. Locklair set the poems to music before you knew each other?

BROUGHTON: No. He had found my book, *A Long Undressing*, and he wrote me a letter saying he was entranced with the poems and there was a group of them he wanted to set to music.

STUDENT: Have you heard what he's done?

BROUGHTON: Yes, he sent me a tape. I thought they were delightful; they're going to be sung tonight. So that's how I'm here this time. I was here once before.

STUDENT: About twelve years ago, I believe.

BROUGHTON: Twelve years ago, yes.



Photo by Ed McKee

But one always gets invited. I've long since given up trying to go places I want to go. There's no point in that. You only go where you're wanted. I mean, you might want to go to Buckingham Palace, but unless they invite you . . .

STUDENT: Mr. Broughton, how does a poet go about getting books of poetry published?

BROUGHTON: It's quite easy to get into magazines, but getting into books is another matter. How to do it? Publish yourself.

With my first book, in 1948, like many other people, (including William Blake and William Morris and a lot of others), if you want to get published, you make a book. I'll tell you why it's much more fun than beating your head against the walls of other publishers; they accept it, and it's three years or more before it comes out, because they've got so much else, and they don't care about poetry anyway. And then it's ugly in its design, and you're embarrassed by it. It's full of typos, and so on. It's awful. I've found that it is better to do it myself, so these last two books — this book is, of course, by City Lights, but I worked right with them together, and Joel did the cover. It was turned down by nine publishers, and I said, "Oh, to hell with it; we'll just do it ourselves." It has already sold out the first edition, which shows how much they know. Joel Singer and I, we've been collaborating on making films. He actually set poems of mine; that is, hand printed and typeset them a few years back. We found out it didn't cost all that much money to print a book. I couldn't tell you exactly; you may calculate how much it cost, and it's paid for itself long since. And it's much more fun. It's like making your own movies.

STUDENT: Is that the way you get your films made?

BROUGHTON: Well, of course! You make them yourself. You don't try to get somebody in Hollywood to make

your own work. I mean that is ridiculous. That's like a painter hiring a museum to paint his pictures.

STUDENT: I've never seen one of your films. Could you tell me something about them?

BROUGHTON: No, I can't. You'll have to see them, what they're like. They are poetic films. What can I tell you? They're not documentaries; they're not animation.

STUDENT: They're poetic, though?

BROUGHTON: Well certainly. Everything I do is. I mean, I'm a poet. And the films are poetry. I mean, they're not movies. They are, for me, just an extension of my poetic life, and they have been a wonderful way of publishing poems. They vary a great deal; some are more complicated than others. And it depends on how much money you have. I just finished a new one because I had a grant from the National Endowment; but I don't always have that kind of money.

STUDENT: When did you venture into films and why? What was the impetus?

BROUGHTON: Accidental, like most good things in life. This is way back in 1946 right after the war. I was collaborating on a play with a guy and it bogged down and it was summer and he said, "Why don't we make a movie instead?" He borrowed a camera and we got a couple of people from the local company and we went out and started a movie. We went out to an abandoned cemetery and it ended up being the first surrealist movie ever made in San Francisco. And we just did it for fun: to get out of the house, to experiment with what a camera could do; and to our amazement, we started a whole movement. By then I was hooked on it because I found out what fun it was.

STUDENT: Do you have a preference between the written word and film?

BROUGHTON: No, because they really go together. To me, poetry

is in its making, and so is film. In other words, you make images with words, you make them with people, in landscapes — it's the same thing. It's an extension of the poetic experience.

STUDENT: Would you describe your poetry as *imagist*?

BROUGHTON: No . . . I don't really know . . . I know I have my own . . . my own rhythm . . . my own language. And I know it tends to be a four beat line . . . But what I mean by image is, I don't like lyrical blur; I don't care for obfuscation in poetry. I'm very much for clarity; I think that is the most amazing thing that one can achieve. It's very easy to be obscure. It also shows so often that your own mind is not very clear about, not what you want to say, but how you see things. And I would say in my work there has always been a struggle to be clearer and to, I hope, have dazzling clarity . . . Blinding lights . . . Because one wants to shed some light. I don't want to shed dark. Obscurity doesn't interest me. I've never been interested in taking a dim view of things. Who would want to live in a dim view? I certainly don't. I'm more for light, that's why I wrote this book about lights. I like incitements, delights, and all forms of liberation.

STUDENT: Could we back up a little bit?

BROUGHTON: What, to my childhood?

STUDENT: Close. Your academic background.

BROUGHTON: You mean my teaching background?

STUDENT: I knew you taught at San Francisco State but had you gone to school there?

BROUGHTON: No. I avoided teaching as long as possible but then I married again when I was in my late forties and very soon after had 2 children; and I just had to earn more money. Then of course I

went right into teaching graduate work because I published so much. They made me an associate professor automatically; I never was good at teaching undergraduates; I'm not patient enough.

STUDENT: We're an unruly lot.

BROUGHTON: I like teaching people who have learned the basics. I get much more kick out of minds who think they know where they are going and are ready to take plunges. That's quite a different level; I taught graduate people who were mostly in the school of fine arts there (at San Francisco State) and taught film making; I also taught at the same time, at the San Francisco Art Institute. It is wonderful to teach in a school where people are only making things; nobody is writing term papers or doing insolvable problems; they are all making things, and that's a wonderful atmosphere.

STUDENT: Term papers do not "make" anything? What about criticism? What is the role of the critic, in your view, does he or she make anything?

BROUGHTON: Critics? No! They take dim views. They are only interested in finding fault. I've learned practically nothing from them. They're only interested in showing off their opinions. I still resent writing criticism which I do only if I have to (or if I'm offered money). I don't like the whole idea really. What any artist needs is appreciation; the artist needs praise; to be encouraged, to excel himself, to take greater risks and to go beyond. Your public — your audiences and your reviewers — I am not saying critics — (there are some perceptive critics), but the general run of reviewers and critics want to pull you back. They always want you to repeat what you did sometime ago. They aren't interested in your extending yourself — your trying something new. I have people who resent enormously that I have not stayed back in 1953, when I made a film called "The Pleasure Garden," which many people liked and thought that's what I should keep on doing. It's like a

TO THE FIRE-BEARERS
OF SAGITTARIUS

This night is ruled by the high-hunting Horse-Man
Who brings his fire? Who carries it forth?
Prometheus, stay with us Jupiter's in charge here
Is this his firebird flying through our stars?

'We make our destinies by our choice of gods'
as Virgil knew as we may regret
Look, I have chosen fealty to a lord of fire
Surrendering my icefloes I splash in the melting

Can we also make our gods by our choice of destinies?
Tell me what you yearn for I can tell you who you are
Do you dream great vows? Do you invent invocations?
Do you let your soul believe in Angelic Bowmen?

We each have an Archer who needs our recognition
We each have an Archer devoted to our needs
Stake your own claim Shake out your arrows
Are you willing to be wed to a sacred target?

Fire-bearers, flutter not And no wamble
Focus your insights to clarify your steed
Fly on his flame Aim as you ride
Carry home our destinies to their radiant source!

product that sells, you see. If you want to be a success as a painter, find something that sells and keep doing it, and there's a market and then everybody will buy one. But this is not necessarily how the artist lives. It is much more fun to turn the whole thing around and try to look at it a different way or take a new adventure. I've found in the end that I am a better critic of my work than anybody else. I know the things that are wrong with it, or the things that should be there just because they're not right; but there are potentialities.

STUDENT: I was reading some of your poems and some of the attitudes reminded me of Kerouac.

BROUGHTON: Yes, I like Kerouac's poetry; I like his poetry much better than his novels.

STUDENT: I have read only his novels, but some of the scenes have the same feeling in key with nature.

BROUGHTON: Yes. I like his energy and his craziness; his enthusiasm is one of the great things, without that, art is nothing. Enthusiasm: that's the real winner. God, you have to get terribly excited.

STUDENT: What poets have had the most profound influence on your writing?

BROUGHTON: Blake, Shakespeare, Whitman; I am very fond of Hopkins and Eliot.

STUDENT: Yeats?

BROUGHTON: Yeats, yes of course.

STUDENT: I noticed a Blakean influence in the "Nursery Problems;" Did you have *Songs of Innocence* in mind?

BROUGHTON: Yes. Blake is really one of my great gurus, I would say. For instance you know he did those wonderful illuminated works. That's the way I feel about my films.

STUDENT: Blake and film?

BROUGHTON: That they are illum-

inated poems, so often they really are. They are celebrations of . . . of the wonders of the waters of the world. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* or the eternal child; they are archetypal. My film that celebrates the human body is very Blakean because figures, the human figures throughout the film, they are all beautiful.

STUDENT: Are the "Nursery Problems" parodying Blake?

BROUGHTON: Not so much in the films but, there is a poem . . . let me just make one point. I don't think I'll read this tonight but it is a very popular one: "Nipples and cocks, nipples and cocks, nothing tickles the palate like nipples and cocks" . . . well, obviously this has a nursery rhyme jingle. It is the sound, "nipples and cocks," you see, that started it. It came like the Mother Goose rhymes come — because of the words. You know, who killed cock Robin and I said, "It's the sparrow . . . and why is it the sparrow with my bow and arrow? It is the rhyme that determines it.

STUDENT: Could you tell me about your travels in the East?

BROUGHTON: In which East? The Near or the Far East?

STUDENT: A friend of mine met you in Sri Lanka — Tissa Jayatilaka?

BROUGHTON: It was in some American's house in Kandy. He had a set up and everybody came around and made art. I was there and did a reading with some other poets, that is some local poems. And he was there, I'm sure, yes. Oh, that's amusing, yes. I love it. South East Asia is one of my favorite places in the world if not the most favorite. Now I don't care about northern Asia, that is Japan or China, they are too serious for me. But I love South East Asia.

STUDENT: What is it that appeals to you about it?

BROUGHTON: I feel absolutely at home. The people are so wonderful and

I'm not speaking of India, where the people are horrid. But I mean Indonesia, Bali and Java and Thailand. The Buddhist countries are a delight to me. They look at you. They really look at you and they touch you and they communicate. Their eyes are happy; they share things. It's a very fertile part of the world.

STUDENT: What about artistic influence?

BROUGHTON: No, there's no art there. In their tradition, they don't have an art as we think of it. People just keep doing the same things, you know.

They never make up anything new. They paint their old myths and stories in the present day. It's a completely different life. They live in the archetypes of ancestors; there's no personal push to be egotistically important. They have got it all. They don't have to knock one another down trying to impress one another. It's a very different world.

STUDENT: Do you think this is important to the creation of art?

BROUGHTON: If you don't need to create art, if their living is art the way it is in Bali, it doesn't need any nice tag on it. They make everything artistic. Their garbage dumps are beautiful, their backyards are like temples. I mean they have aesthetic qualities in everything they do. Art is not something special. This is why I like that part of the world.

STUDENT: How come our garbage dumps don't strike you as so aesthetically pleasing?

BROUGHTON: Because, that is not the point. It's our attitude toward them we are talking about. Anyway, that's the Far East. Now what other East do you have?

STUDENT: Well, that was the one I was interested in.

BROUGHTON: This is the mysterious East for me — right here. I'm a native of the Far West. And not only was I, but

also my grandparents were born in California. This is more mysterious; I'll tell you why. My ancestors who came to this country came to the Carolinas before the revolutionary war. I have ties to this part, although I don't know it well. So, it is more fascinating. And it would be nice to say that the people in the Carolinas are as entrancing and aesthetic as the Balinese. I don't know . . . they don't wear sarongs that I've noticed. Alright, ask me another one.

STUDENT: Did you have any formal training in film?

BROUGHTON: No. Well there's a little book I got after we made the film. A little book, *How To Make Better Movies*, and we've already made the movie. It's like anything else. The only way you learn to write is by writing and the only way you can paint is by painting, and you have to keep doing it. And don't just do one thing, and say "how do you like it?" You have to . . .

STUDENT: Keep on pushing?

BROUGHTON: Yes. Until you have your own style, say your music. This also refers to prose too — your sense of a paragraph. You only find that out by writing. I wrote five novels which have, thank God, never been published; but I learned a lot about writing. I wrote lots of poems which were never printed. And so I've seen lots of films, but the films I liked were the ones I was raised on as a child.

STUDENT: The simplicity and the clarity, you are talking about?

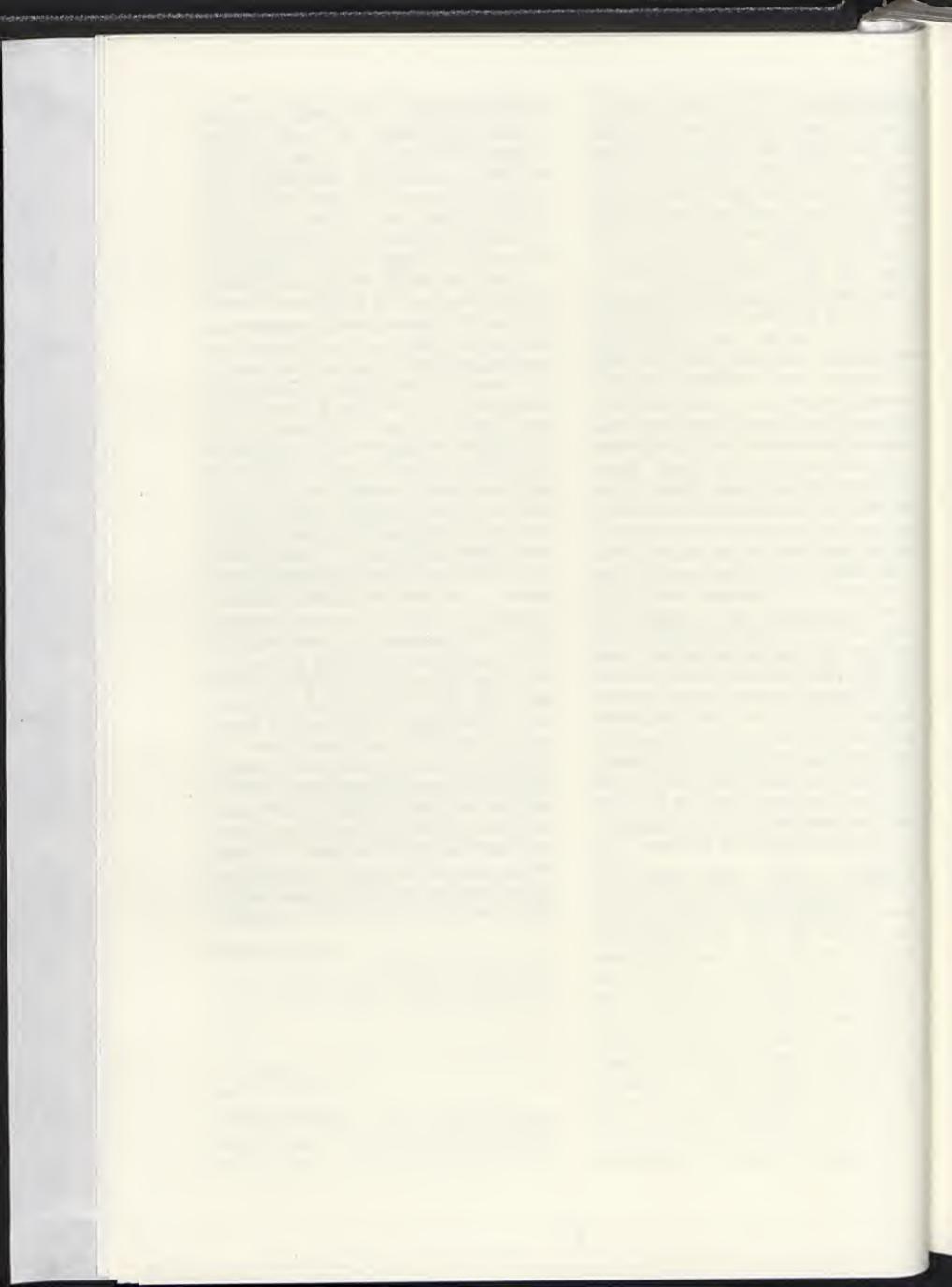
BROUGHTON: Yes. Because it touches people the most. That matters to me more than anything. I'm not trying to impress them. That's not my bag. I want everybody to come along with me and let's dance all the way. That's my whole approach. And my whole approach is celebrational. I don't mean to put down generally ways of feeling superior. What were we talking about?

STUDENT: Formal training.

BROUGHTON: Oh, formal training. We got the camera and we were making what was called an experimental film. So we experimented, right? You turn it upside down, fast, slow motion, you know, all those things, and you find out what the language of cinema is. You could do that with one film. And exposure, oh God, anybody can take a picture, you know that. It is how you see that makes a difference. All film makers need to have courses in design, color and composition. They don't need to play with cameras, they should really learn something about basics of art. And boy, that would help them. I always tell them, "The more you know about everything except film, the better your films are." The more you know about all the other arts, the better. Using all you know about architecture, dance and poetry, furniture, anything, the richer your work will be. That's the fascination of it. You use everything. You use all your skills, everything you know gets in there. You choose how to frame something; you learn how to express things with significant gesture, you know, instead of the word. I mean, that's too easy. How to articulate it visually — tell as much as possible visually — that's the great challenge of filmmaking. It's quite different from making a mini-series on television where everybody just talks on the telephone. That's cheating. That's getting the words to do all the action for you.

STUDENT: Your celebrational attitude is interesting. Do you ever see yourself as taking a break from creating?

BROUGHTON: No, absolutely not. Unless I'm creating, my health suffers violently. The only way I can maintain well-being is through involvement in creative projects. This book we did this year (*Ecstasies*) that's where I ended up in June. In the making of the book, I was involved with design, typeset, and layout — all of these are really exciting projects. I get up very early; I usually work from 5:00 in the morning until breakfast — 8:00 or so. Then you see, I've got my rhythm going and my sense of the world's o.k., then I can cope with any of the dumb duties one has to do. But if I don't have that, I get sick; and I discover it's just "unhealthy creating." I get symptoms. Actually, I'm very healthy. I have a very hard time doing nothing. My ideal vacation is a very energetic tour; I can't bear just sitting around. In some ways I'm more active than ever . . . Well I don't teach full time. That's wonderful! I get to putter . . . And plan impossible projects . . . I think the universe is a very exciting place; I have more sense of wonder about it all than when I was young. It's just the way I am. I don't choose to look just on the bright side — it isn't just the bright side — the bright and the dark dance together always — that's what's fun — it goes in and out and up and down. I would celebrate despair just as much as ecstasy because one learns equally from both. You have to make friends with your depression and find out what it is trying to tell you; and then there is nowhere to go but up anyway. It is the dance of life that is the main thing to get in touch with.



AIRPORTS

You are always there,
Waiting in airports,
Ready to raise
A delicate hand
To the one you think
Has touched you.

They stream past you
In uneven rows
You wait and watch
For someone
To turn back
And match your movement.

You stand there,
Watching planes come and go,
Like birds flocking
Around an old barn,
Waiting for them to spell out
A definite word.

EPIPHANY

Early this morning
Thirteen red tulips
Turgid in the garden
Stressed silence more vivid
Than florist imitations.

They scream the glory
Of the midday plucking —
The four fingers and opposing thumb
Of one hand and the fist
Of the other holding stems
Like twine binds a fasces.

The arrangement between us
Buries space.
Droplets squeezed from stems
I bore through air
Are replenished
By cold well-tapped water.

FONTAINE

I

After I am asleep Chris calls,
meaning to call his brother. He
chose my number by mistake. His
neighbor went to buy a sidecar
rig, but got another bike:
newer, faster. I was glad for
the call, for the story. Later,
I dreamed it was my sister called.

II

She is named for a man who followed
oceanic movement, and then sent
messages, never breaking distant ties.
He was named for a bishop who knew
Huguenots resilient to events.

III

She tells me, "Each hope is a misdirection:
wish for uncharted movement."
Crossing the Huguenot Bridge I
think of Bishop Fontaine surrendering
his fears. On Monument Avenue, I
see the cows behind Uncle Matt
no longer lost at sea.

IV

After I was asleep Chris called.
I was glad. Later,
I dreamed it was my sister.

CONTOUR PLOUGHING

Following the ploughshare's tough
and abnegatory, but its edge,
when you don't force it,
seeks the shape earth's easy with;
mule knows that path,
finds it for you, stubborn;
let mule and blade go on,
they'll turn soil and stubble,
tug rock, dislodge
old dead roots;
all you have to do's
hang on tight, trust the plough,
make yielding seem natural.

POPPED

People will talk,
Speaking in tongues
so you cannot hear them,
And writing tomes
About trite painted tears
Shed for trivial yesterdays.

You cannot know
of the books
about books
about books

About you. Saying
"I knew him when . . ."
Your vaguest memories stand
Monumental beside those
of other people, like empty

Changing rooms.
Click-whir,
Click-whir,
A halftone reproduction of yesterday's
Dilemma, made into a bouquet
and placed lovingly on the table;
Then thrown away with Sunday's news.

BABY TEETH

Shark teeth I gather
and my teeth. Souvenirs
of 'once a time'. All
these teeth I hold
were mine now fallen
from my jaw.

Hand huddled assemblage.
these broken bits
of seeming shell. My jagged
rim and root dissolve
where once it entered me.
Personal periapt with

shark bite presence. No two teeth
alike. They preserve uniqueness
Insistent remnants. The leavings
of a younger me. My talisman
teeth . . . artifacts of a time
when mythic creatures drifted down.

They touched the soft pit.
red, where bone had been and brought
a psychic healing. Archaeologist.
I can hold them all on
one palm. Scattered, they would
fall and land obscure between the grass.

Fossils for a future find.
Anglo-Saxon childhood,
one mouthful.

THE TEMPEST

(A word representation of a painting by Giorgione)

The rain now will fill
the brook of our love which
kept us each from nuptial
green. Then can you pass across
the city bridge
which all these many years
you have given vigil.

My white robe have I
shed, and when the child emerged
you leaned upon woody spear.
And in spring light, in fawning
obedience, watched the plant stems
and waited for the waters
to come and fill that
which it is said must be filled.

For though the brook narrows
as it nears,
we must both
— and I not without my doubts
look out —
await the thunder.

DAYFALL

He looks at himself in the mirror
Ink having filled the air;
He cannot see a reflection
But his eyes are not a void.

Three sit on a hill
Overlooking the last town.
A shadow hides in the darkness.

His eyes open.
A cry echoes with silent tears
As he realizes the saved are lost,
That they had half truth
Which destroyed itself:
He understands the truth
Opening his eyes
Still not seeing a reflection.

The Equinox will come:
The three will stand on the hill.
One will be, one will accept, one will deny.
Armageddon is not won by prophet's words.

The light is turned on and off.
Find him with his eyes closed
Hoping to see his reflection in the mirror.
He knows the difference between
The absence of light and
Darkness.
And his blindness is a
Vision transcending the clock
And history book and cubic meters.

The gates of Dis open:
The three are one
All faceless
 nameless.
Souls in Hell are nameless too;
The last town disintegrates.

Dayfall, only trees and flowers grow.
The shadow orients itself;
He tries to find the shadow.
He lets the truth grow.
There is a turbulence
Below the ice
That is not seen nor felt, and as
Mortals forget Walpurgis
The ice begins to melt.

The triangle stands on a hill;
A wooden cross rots and crumbles,
The hound bays at the moon.
Candles at pentagram's points are lit
Summoning Darkness.

His eyes open knowing
The Equinox will be transcended;
All love is good and god.
He is the one, his strength is love.
The oyster shell is removed,
Revealing the pearl of night.
He wonders if he is really there or
Is it just his reflection in the mirror?

WHALES

Charity saw the whales migrate.
With her young man,
walking the West Coast cliffs,
route planned for that thing
only, although they are of a nature
both to love the trail. Her mother
tells me yes, they saw
the big beasts hummocking north.

Inland and middle-aged here
in the southeast Piedmont, I
who have seen the Pacific
imagine a lunge of whales,
basalt monadnocks, waterfalls gouting
off their pigeye faces and
dum dum foreheads, spume
from the blowhole shooting up
through the fuming spindrift.

All whales smile like the Mona Lisa.

All whales look
like aggrandizements of tadpoles.

Charity and her young man, my friend
her mother says,
are glad for what they saw.

POEM FOR FATHER

A timeworn gesture
Found in nine months swelling
Collapsed when an upstart
Formed the caress
Of your large delicate hands.
Three drenched faces
Reaffirm that there is
Never enough time.

It's mothers you love.
Anxious to weather voyages
You map out,
They wait to empty their holds
In a foreign port
And make it home,
Describe symptoms
You ascribe to conditions,
Lavish themselves in ointment
To stop the itching.
When they can't their feet
You steer them to the table,
And you remind them
To taste well their cravings.

I've wondered
When you loosen diapers
Pinned too tightly
Give nods to widows
And hands to lonely pregnant women
If here
You find repose.

In her letter, Mother
Anticipates your return
As on many mornings
And writes about the weather,
Birds on the opposite side
Of the kitchen glass.
Grass to be planted
For winter. She believes
The child you deliver
Is legitimate and waits to hear
If it's a boy or a girl.

I'm reading her news
On my way home from work;
She forgets to disclose
The outcome of your labor,
But it's no matter
Because for you
Nothing is fruitless.

TURNING FARMHOUSE: DECEMBER, 1968

My uncle, the one I spoke of
at dinner, would understand my
turning up in a farmhouse, out
of the basement apartment and
with a different view.

The Gulf Coast tugboat sits
on the landside of the highway, turned
by Camille into something else.

We sit in a country church looking
like visitors, travellers, looking
at the trout stream Jordan
behind the altar. All the others are
alike, their Sunday best until
I am unsure of my own students,
all changed for the wedding.

Your mother, gentle and correct
as fishermen tipping porkpie hats
as they pass Dorothy in her farmhouse
miles above Kansas,
is trying to decide, telling
you what to wear to a Bedford wedding.

After dinner you clap my knee, laughing.
I remember my turn-
of-the-century uncle Sigmund.

TODAY

Someone will come, not Lettie, not
Virginia, someone's sister, from a brown
and amber photograph. She's company,
you sweep; chipped plaster falls to
order, matrices on blue
linoleum. Catch yourself, rest
your weight against the powder-
coolness of a kitchen wall.

I see you leaning
in the wake of time, wonder
what your face was, when
the century delivered
you, wailing
in its infancy.

The world and you have seen
four wars, so far. The first
took playmates, barely out of classes.
When the careless anger slowed, another.
He had come to see you, spoken
for a quarter-hour through the screen-door,
worried on his way to leave.

Afternoon — you're teasing lettuce,
slicing for dinner
salad, Daddy's wooden-handled
knife in hand but dull with age.

Dull as your husband's tongue became. You
fed him, read Sunday
funnies till he could not move his lips
to laugh. His look you have acquired,
preserve. The present speaks, you stare
unlistening, conduct your monologue
with other years. Evening
paper slaps the porch. Remembering
is sharpening an iron blade.
Edges linger after rust
yields splinters of metallic dust. The images
you salvage, just the same.

SAND PAINTING

There is a crevice between worlds.
At times the time is found
To slip through
To a desert land of red.

Dots of shrubs and cacti
Let the eyes roll with the hills.

Beds of once-a-year streams
Lead to nowhere, then disappear.

Mesas with tops made for dancing
Seem to blossom from the earth.

The silence never breaks;
It only changes degrees:
The flapping of a bird's wings,
Or grains of sand moving across a rock.

One always keeps a toe
Near the crevice,
Because there is no one here,
There is never anyone here,
Except for the Indian
Who has seen everything
And has chosen to turn to stone.

EXPLORER

*"And he stayed yet other seven days;
and sent forth the dove; which returned
not again unto him any more."*

— Genesis 8:12

She was fastidious,
would not rest her foot on carrion.
The raven had. That first time
exhaustion brought her back.
One week later it was duty,
bearing one leaf from the limb
that beckoned, branched
enough to hold one bird.
Hard to leave that perch.
Hard to return.

In the clamorous Ark another week
her dove brain craved solitude,
nestlings crowding
the indifferent accommodating breast.
She comforted her mate,
wind shrilling in her ear
past tree bones jutting
from glutted mudpools.
She listened for its hiss,
answered the third time
Noah tossed her into emptiness.

ODE TO PLATH

Oh loathsome force which scars and
kills
You perch upon my window sill
In great expectancy.
Your spirit, drafty Sylvia, of
death
Enthralls me until I very dearly
 wish to shake you off —
And out of me!

Go on!
And yet you linger,
Bullish, bloody-eyed —
I must steal stoic stares at you,
The mar of painful other side.

To speak of my reality
Is harder thing, it seems.
I shall obtain the strong,
 the solid
Good.
Rich, liberating dreams.

So Sylvia, with perfect verse,
Is it true you tend to
 strangle?
A drop of ice
In struggling mind —
A float on very shifty brine
Of doubt
And swelling Art.

SHOWING SLIDES

The on-machine sound hits your kitchen floor, against the wall a woman falls in place. You turn to look, your expression an echo: "That's Mama." On ageing plaster she cracks like a mirror, captures you in your cold projector child stare.

(There she is)

Another frame — with cousins, which one took infection from a china sliver? She takes you to the well, winding down to your reflections, too far to see, till you hear silver splash and break the circle-shell.

For her you would set tables, every day at eight. She holds the apron you wore to threads, drying dishes well-water clean.

(August sun against the bucket played light-crystals on her hands — "There's Mama.")

Seeing her face I know you, I know beneath the surface tension, the woman, summer, calling you, when dew rose off backyard fields, her breath, a silver-edged echo, those mornings on her mountain.

ANOINTMENT

Scuttling it
like a pebble
with my foot
on the road its small ears
were pinned back to splintered hind claws
I lifted, like stamps
out of an old album,
dry fur and dead pink
of the inner ear;
between my index and thumb it crumbled;
this witches' dust
sprinkled into its mouth,
toothless, with tire tread tongue —
and out of this gaping chimney,
a small flame flashed up.

Winners of the Sesquicentennial Creative Arts Contest

Judges

Dr. Margaret Smith

Mr. Bynum Shaw

Dr. Edwin Wilson

ACTORS

From the veranda I watched one afternoon,
As my mother held discreet counsel
With her glass,
Which answered with faint clinking sounds.

Perhaps she suspected the truth,
For I was still ignoble under
The direct inquisition of her eyes.

And when the fight below on the street broke,
it was James from across the street and someone.
She was alarmed:
"Someone might be hurt, I'll phone the police."
And, "Tell me what you're thinking!"

I remember that moment well,
When I said, "Please stay here,
with your telephones and sunglasses.
Your metronomes and ice, please."

And I remember saying, half facing her,
I think I'd . . . I think I must
take a scream, a dripping face,
a clutching hand;
Yes! Yes, that's it.
Leave them alone.

It wasn't clear what I meant,
till I ran down the hall,
to the door.
And like a bloodthirsty Cossack,
took the steps three and four at a time
down the hill to the street below.

FINE DAY IN THE SAND — EBB TIDE

James had just changed into his pajama trousers and was standing near the foot of the bed, rubbing the back of his neck as if to encourage circulation. "Listen, do you mind?" he said, "Let's just talk about something else, all right?" He was addressing a woman, who, at that particular moment was lying on the bed before him, clicking the buttons of a remote-control television box as if she had been doing so since exactly dawn of Tuesday the previous week.

"But honey," she said in a voice which, had it been slightly lower, might have issued straight from her stomach, "it's just so traumatic. I mean, here he is, this guy that millions of people just flip over every week —"

"Where in hell did I pack those cigarettes?" James crossed to a valise on the far side of the room and began forthwith to rifle through its contents. The woman on the bed watched his movements from the corners of her eyes.

"My God, you must be so tired. It's such a long drive, I honestly don't know how you do it."

James had found a cigarette and leaned his back against a wall at the right of the bed — in full view of the television screen and just beside the entranceway to the bathroom — to light it. "It's only two lousy hours." There was no outstanding expression in his voice.

The woman on the bed turned her face fully toward him but said nothing for a moment. Then: "I missed you."

"Me too, Nancy." He started toward the bed. The back of his neck had grown bright red from the rubbing it had taken. "The weeks are murder."

"I don't see why you can't just transfer or something. There's a perfectly good college here, you know. Every bit as good as Duke."

"I don't know how the hell many times we've discussed this."

"Well," Nancy halted to light a cigarette of her own, "I just think it might be a good idea is all. It seems like an eternity from one weekend to the next." Her eyes returned, not quite abstractly, to the television screen before the bed. James didn't make it to the bed.

"I'm going in for a drink." He turned and walked into the next room, the living room, and opened the closet-bar doors.

"This has got to be the worst week of my life." Nancy's words, complete with dramatic pause between each, reached him from the bedroom. "I just can't get those girls to do anything. And we took on this new girl yesterday — who's — positively — insulting. And with the holidays coming up, I don't know what I'm going to do. It's such a mess. You just really can't believe the pressure I've been under. And I'm still too young for it." The pause here was strangely long, possibly meant to build up tension to an unbelievable degree. "Maybe I'll just quit, that's all."

James was by now standing back in the bedroom doorway, recently poured drink in hand. "Which is going to be interesting, considering you own the place." He said it with all the purport of a poorly-trained actor taking a cue from the wings.

"But I am just going through hell." Nancy adjusted the position of the pillows behind

KRAIG CULBERTSON

her neck as if the effort alone was really too much for her. "One of us has got to go. Have you got that? One of us."

"This is getting serious."

Once again she graced him with her full face. "Honey, don't you even care? This is a very important part of my life, you know."

"Nance, I'm sorry but in case you haven't noticed, you say the same goddamn thing every weekend."

"Well, what do you want to talk about, then?" The reply came with an edge of chill, yet James marvelled, as always, at the way her words managed to take just enough time in following one another to create an air of almost unqualified indifference. Some several weeks earlier she had called him long distance to tell him how absolutely ridiculous it was the way doctors refused to understand their patients' professional commitments, that some people simply haven't got time to be following prolonged prescriptions, and that her own doctor was the most blatant and unforgivable offender of all. Her wording being what it was, caused the conversation to go somewhat like a treatise from the Pope to his letter opener on the possible proposal of a new, if somewhat drab, proclamation.

"I'm sorry. Really. I had pretty damn many martinis with Rob before I left Greenville." Nancy narrowed her eyes at him.

"I thought you'd been drinking." This was among the most oddly contradictory things that had stood out most about Nancy in the past months: in spite of her apparent indifference she missed very little. This and the fact that it felt good as hell to be in bed with her. It was possibly the latter thought that had prompted his confession, as well as his present start to the bed.

"Too many." James sat in the bed, kicking his feet beneath what seemed like several feet's thickness of comforter-blankets, and placed his drink on the bedside phone-stand. He then clasped his fingers behind his head and edged his hips more toward the center—or, rather, the warmer part of the bed. An evanescent shade of something like delight passed over his face. "Look, let's talk about your brother. How's he getting along?"

"Oh, him."

"Does he like it at, what is it?"

"Tulane. Yes, it's always the same with him. I swear he's going to be the next New Jersey state representative or something like that. He's such a doll."

"Won't that be grand."

"Honestly, honey, why can't you just transfer up to Rutgers? The least you could do is apply to the law school up here. Don't you want to be near when you graduate?"

James opened his mouth to make a reply, but Nancy suddenly began what, for another person, would have been a bolt to an upright position, but which, for her, was more of a slow-motioned start forward and a wave of a cigarette-affected hand. "Look, there he is again! There he is, it's him. This is just so traumatic." Something which sounded openly like a groan came from James' part of the bed. "I-just-can't-believe-it. Here's this guy that millions of people go just berserk over, and I had an affair with him. Did you know about that?"

"No, as a matter of fact you hadn't mentioned it," said James, in the best matter-of-fact voice he could manage.

"He was staying at the Saint Francis Hotel in Caldwell, and Julie, my very best friend, was in charge of this organizing committee and she was so in with him and everything, that she took me right up to his room and introduced us. My God, you-should-have-seen that room. Just literally bowls of cocaine everywhere and his own private valet . . ."

"And he was Martin Sullivan."

"Yes, my God, Martin Sullivan. Everyone knows him. Everyone."

James' right hand went distractingly to the back of his neck again. "Nancy," he said, squinting at the television screen, "is this guy supposed to be a comedian? I mean, is that what he does and all?"

"Not a comedian for goodness sake. He's a comic actor. Some people think he has a very good future in television."

"Nance," James said more slowly this time, as if giving sufficient pause for all the evidence to be in, "this guy is really an extreme case of no-talent."

"Oh, who cares? He's such a doll, isn't he?"

"And he looks almost as good as, and I mean really now, as Rocky Marciano — after the Walcott fight, mind you."

"He's not that bad. Besides, he's so rich."

"Oh, that's a helluva thing to say, let me tell you."

"I . . . this is just so traumatic."

That desired cranial circulation being evidently nonobligatory, James increased the intensity of his neck-rubbing — even despite the raw discomfort it was beginning to cause. "All right, I'm a Duke man, now. Just tell me, I mean if you don't mind, give me the exact reasons why you slept with this guy, and I'm sure I'll understand. Phony things aside, didn't something, anything, about the guy himself arouse passion in you? Please at least tell me you were attracted to him for his goddamn toenails or something."

"What passion? James, what have toenails got to do with anything? Honestly," her voice went even lower than usual, and her eyes flickered darkly, suspiciously, "you can be so off-the-wall sometimes."

"You're supposed to be applying your dress to my wounds, madam."

"What? It was just no big deal. Everyone does that sort of thing these days, once in a while." She halted her appeal long enough to drag on her cigarette, exhale engagedly, and then collect whatever thoughts might have slipped her between the two actions. "It was almost like being a groupie or something, that's all."

James turned his eyes to examine Nancy's profile: dark, sensuous eyebrows and the rather large but attractively curved nose, dark eyes; thick, desirable lips. "He didn't even have a tattoo that especially enticed you? Nothing?"

"What have tattoos got to do with an affair?" Nancy was now wide-eyed in prodigious assurance that something was indeed unsound here. "Really, you're behaving a bit strangely tonight. Do you feel all right?"

"Terrific — I'm sorry. Excuse me for a moment." And as most young men are wont to do when they are beginning to feel not-too-well, he headed, still squinting and rubbing his neck, toward the bathroom entrance.

Once over the sink, he dropped several seltzer tablets into a glass of water which he then lifted, before the tablets had dissolved, and drank, washing down aspirin he had tossed in his mouth a second before. At that particular moment, he couldn't imagine ever having tasted anything so bitter. He shook involuntarily, breathed a stifled gasp, then went back into the bedroom.

"Why not let's go to bed?" He walked past the bed, toward the television. "And sorry, but this TV's got to go." The power-button was given a rather "reestablishing" click.

"I hope you feel better in the morning," Nancy spoke to the silhouette climbing into bed with her. "I love you anyway, you madman."

As night-blindness fled, James found his eyes fixed on the back of Nancy's head. "At least face this way if you don't mind." He suddenly realized a prompted tone in his voice and despised it.

"Are you gonna be nice, now?"

"I'm sorry. Yes, of course. I'm just not myself tonight. It's the martinis. You see, I had thirteen —"

"You worry me so, sometimes. The way you ramble on." She turned to him.

"I worry me too. Sometimes. I don't mean —"

"And by the way, let's just skip the other thing tonight. You don't mind, do you?"

A very leavening silence followed.

"It's not such a big deal, you know."

"Listen, I understand that we're all adults here and all that, but once, just once let's show a little passion for something that's good and meaningful, huh Nance? Jesus, it is a big deal."

"Don't start again. Just don't. Don't confuse the issue."

"Confuse? God, confusing! That's good," he informed no one in particular. He opened his mouth again, but the slight pressure of a hand on his cheek stopped him.

"You shouldn't let things bother you so much." She ran her fingers gently up to his temple. "You're always analysing. These are the best years of your life, you know, you should just be happy."

"I'm a goddamn bore tonight and I know it. Even my neck is numb. Too many drinks, I guess; just ignore me."

Nancy replied with a sigh and was almost instantaneously asleep.

In the silence, darkness lay above and around James and oppressed him. He tried several different positions — some with one part or another of his body in contact with Nancy, some on the far edge of the bed — but finally gave up and, catching the pack of cigarettes from the phone-stand, walked into the living room.

For a long while, he stood abstractedly smoking in the middle of the room, eyes arbitrarily drawn to the "soft lighting" effect of moonlight through the glass panes of the French doors which opened onto the back walkway. Finally, and with decisive bare-chested chill, he launched himself into a sitting position on a large section of sofa.

The night he and Nancy had met began innocently enough: a wedding reception at the club for the brother of a longtime friend. Not one for absolute propriety, Nancy had introduced herself. "You must be James. Nancy. Tell me the truth, aren't you absolutely ready to cry of boredom?" Once, when he was a rather underdeveloped ten years of age, a group of east-elementary boys surprised James on his way home from St. Paul, a Catholic parochial school to which some cross-town children made periodic, ignoble raids. In the battle, James had held his ground bravely, but was dropped by a large stone, thrown against his head. A young girl, whom James had never seen before, suddenly appeared on the scene as if from nowhere to help him to a nearby lawn and nursed his bleeding forehead by tearing a section of her new white skirt and pressing it against the wound. It was possibly in memory of that spirit of spontaneous understanding and sympathy that James found his mind swayed suddenly from thoughts of the most efficient form of escaping the reception to fully attending Nancy. The evening progressed as an upward-climbing rollercoaster approaching zenith.

Once, as they circled in drunken dance, she pulled her face back and asked him in a very low voice what he wanted, besides her, in life. "You have good enough looks and education to do anything. What do you want? Just what do you want?" The question had stayed with him in the following weeks as their relationship grew steadily more oppressive with smattery. Nothing one could exactly put his hand on at the time, but something nonetheless corrosive.

He put out his third cigarette in an ashtray beside the couch and leaned forward, elbows on knees, to hold his face in his hands. In ambient silence he looked once again at the glass-paned doors. For a moment he tried to imagine a woman with a tattoo of a man's name indelibly etched on her skin, who couldn't remember, and really didn't care to remember, who the man was or why she had had the tattoo. Unable to form the picture in his mind, he stood up decisively, chest against cold, and walked over to the coffee table. He took a pen from beside the telephone and wrote on the back of an envelope, 'Nancy — I don't know exactly yet, but I've just an idea. Real emotion — for anything, or at least something in particular, with meaning; and nothing completely phony. Sorry, but we really did miss each other somehow. J.'

He then walked back into the bedroom and halted to look over the empty side of the bed to Nancy. In silence for a moment he watched her as she lay there, snoring softly, white-skinned, redolent, vulnerable, desirable. He was sure he loved her, and for just a moment emotions moved into his throat and held sway. But then he leaned over the bed and began speaking in a soft, yet insistent voice. "In the first place, Nance, there's just no passion here. See, love without meaningful passion . . . well, it's just a warm, sunny beach without an ocean." The snoring continued, undaunted.

He moved away from the bed and changed into a clean shirt and pants. Heedfully, he deposited his pajamas into the valise before closing it and making the rather long walk to the landing threshold and door beyond.



No Great Feat

DAN FULLER



Floating III



BEDTIME STORY

*"And striving to be man, the worm
Mounts through all the spires of form."*

— Emerson

"Tell us a story, grandpa!" It was one of those nights when you can see corridors of snow by looking out the window up to a streetlamp, corridors of snow that splattered against the window pane or whipped up off the ground they briefly touched to climb back up to the clouds.

"Your grandpa's a little too tired for made-up stories, I'm afraid. But I'll read you one."

There was a whole shelf of storybooks for grandpa to read and re-read: Grimm's fairy tales, *The Shy Stegosaurus of Cricket Creek*, Danny Dunn, Encyclopedia Brown, Tom Swift, the Bobbsey Twins, *The Brave Little Toaster*, *The Little Engine That Could*, bunches and bunches of stories that were good because they sounded better than the formulaic tales grandpa Thenot concocted on the spot, those trick stories that always ended with a bad child getting eaten by a monster or captured by a ghost, while the good child stayed in bed and went to sleep. The pointed moral of these tales bothered Billy Junior, and bored his older siblings, Suzy, age six, and Timothy, age seven.

Timothy remembered the bad part of the stories on the shelf, too, which was that grandpa could never read more than a chapter before the old bedtime rolled around. And the next time grandpa babysat for ma and pa, you could bet no one would remember what book that chapter came from before, least of all grandpa, who ran over the words on a page like a vacuum cleaner without a bag at the end, holding nothing of the story running by, just passing over it and making the sounds — grandpa could hardly ever answer a question about something he had read a few minutes before, when the question had been slowly soaking into Timothy's head. And least of all Billy, who fell asleep before grandpa had even turned the page. Usually.

Timothy tried to break the dumb routine of all this by asking grandpa to tell a story he liked which was in a book. He allowed to Timothy as he didn't like many stories in books that would be good for children to hear. Were they bad stories? No, just hard for children to understand. "You mean, like an atom bomb?"

"Well now, Timmy, what a thing to say! Why 'like an atom bomb'?"

Timothy ran in another room and brought back *The How and Why Wonder Book of Atomic Energy*. Timothy had it open to page four, which was a big color painting of a tomato-colored mushroom cloud in full blossom over some big, American-looking city. "See, grandpa. I've been reading all about this atom bomb in this book, and I think it must be easier for grown-ups to understand. 'Cause I don't know how it can be as bright as the sun and not burn the whole earth up when it ex-expl-explodes," he finished with a glance of triumph at the two bewildered younger children. Here was something they didn't know about, like when only he knew about Santa and the tooth fairy, he thought to himself with a not-so-secret joy.

"Well, Timmy, I'm impressed that a boy your age is already reading up on something as grown-up as all that. You know, your grandpa saw two atom bombs go off once."

The other children stared at the picture, while Timmy's pupils widened with interest. "Two — at once? Were those the ones that ended the big war you fought in? The ones they dropped on the Japs?"

"The ones I saw were shot off a year later, not at the same time, in the Pacific Ocean. Do you know where that is?"

Suzy smirked when Timmy seemed a little bit confused. "You dummy, everybody knows that the Pacific is the world's biggest ocean. It's almost all over the world. Right, grandpa?"

"Right, Suzy. Almost all over the world. Your grandpa went to a part of it near Hawaii. Back then Hawaii wasn't a state. It was just a place to store ships."

"In case the Japanese wanted to attack us?"

"Look, do you kids want to hear this story or tell it? . . . Okay. Now grandpa was a geiger man. Do you know what that means? A geiger man is someone who watches a little machine to see if the atom bomb is sending particles, little tiny balls, through the air, balls that are smaller than snowflakes, that are invisible but can hurt people, just like germs can give you a cold but you can't see them. Grandpa had to watch to see how many of these particles would fly through the air when the bomb went off and after, when some would still be around like germs on a glass after you've had a drink from it. It was very dangerous because nobody knew how many of these particles would hurt someone. Only that a very few would. No one knew just how few. No one ever found out, either, at least not then. And that was why it was so silly for grandpa, like having to play Chutes and Ladders when you've lost the box with the instructions on it. You can't play very well, and I couldn't tell if I was helping the men fight the particles, or helping them if they got some of them."

"Are these particles atoms, grandpa?" Suzy was also starting to doze off. Only Timmy remained curled up, alert.

"Well, yes, Timmy, parts of atoms to be exact."

A blast of wind rattled the storm windows, and Grandpa Thenot crouched down in the big easy chair he had been settling in. He was tired, and more than a little amused by the turn of events which was causing him to rake up the radioactive ash he thought had settled thirty-odd years ago. Hell, he had forgotten so much, and repressed so much (he had been *ordered* to forget so much); his own children had expressed little interest at the time. He had begun to tell the simple story to Timmy, actively sorting out the suitable words and images from the greater anathema of the narrative, the odd delights that would bring only puzzlement to this child, no matter how bright, no matter how substantially the son of his father, son of him, in the great chain reaction of life that had moved against and yet ineluctably along with the smaller chain reactions he had witnessed aboard the Martin PBM-5 "flying boat". His little family fluttered feebly against the entropic decay of those still potent radioactive elements; in like manner, Thenot's memories swelled and lapped against the entropic tale he wove in the chill December night. If this was a motion into the past, that past concerned the present future in ways more striking than the continued presence of the Bomb itself. After all, didn't Ensign Cuddy say —

"Yessir, this is going to be something to tell your grandchildren about, Thenot. You mark my words." Cuddy tilted back the wineskin full of jugaroo, the Marshall Islands' cure for snakebite, made of fermented coconut juice. Cuddy turned toward the third of their party. "Hey Beandip, aren't you going to drink any? One sip and you're on the Ginza strip."

"No suh, I felt a little dried up the other night with some low level infection I caught in

Hawaii. When I went to see the doc I couldn't pee, so I got out my little flask of jugaroo. When the doc come outa the lab, he sidled on up to me and said, talking about that jugaroo I poured in the beaker y'see, 'Don't play no jokes on me by making any substitution. But I got to tell you: your horse has syphillis.' "

"Beandip, you let your horse's shit go up to your brain."

It was a lovely Pacific night, the kind that makes you want to sit out and forego the letter home. Thenot, Cuddy, and Beandip sat on the coral shore of Ebeye, a tiny atoll four miles north of the main island of the Kwajalein Atoll. That main island was a big one — the largest atoll in the world at a length of 66 miles and a width of 18 miles. Ebeye was a lot smaller — one mile long and only 150 yards wide. But it was beautiful. At night. By day, there was a lot of gray junk on the sand and on the burnt-orange coral that felt so soft on your feet you wanted to go natively barefoot, confident in the even surface created by centuries of gentle erosion: oil drums and military flotsam (spent cases of ammo, rusting tools, tank treads) left over from the activity the island had seen in '44 when the allies drove the Japanese from it. Ebeye was used by them as a seaplane base. The Japanese left behind an L-shaped wharf, a cement apron, and a landing ramp in their hasty departure. The beginning of Operation Crossroads, the atom bomb test project, had obliged the army to construct a few Quonset huts and barracks, repair sheds, hangars, a baseball field, a greasy spoon restaurant, an outdoor movie house, and a chapel. A hell of a lot of buildings for a dipshit atoll like that. The ocean made things real picturesque, however. A fresh breeze was always blowing across the atoll, cooling you off and invigorating you with its salty slap against your sweaty face. And at night, a range of unfamiliar constellations to stare at in the almost permanently cloudless (if there were to be any clouds, we were going to have to put them up there) sky, when the waves reached almost to your doorstep, which is almost where Cuddy, Thenot, and Beandip sat, tipping the jugaroo. One thing for sure: laundry was no problem on this island. Water, water everywhere.

It was a nice laid-back Saturday night. The next day, June 24, the B-29's took off from Kwajalein for "dress rehearsal," a chance to see if the good guys on *Dave's Dream* knew how to drop a nuclear egg fused for airburst over the cockamamie target stationed off Bikini Atoll, a crescent of sand four miles long and a couple of hundred yards wide, 175 miles northeast of Kwajalein. As Thenot scoffed down the sausage and eggs the crew on the seaplane whipped up during the flight, he smiled at the childish nature of the test. There below him sprawled an array of ships of all shapes, ages, kinds, and sizes, everything from the *New York*, a 1912 battlewagon which looked rather squat and cheap next to the modern ships, to the *Nagato*, a giant Japanese ship with a huge fire-control tower, to the *Prinz Eugen*, a beautiful sleek German battle cruiser. These were arranged along a rough radius from the *Nevada*, a battlewagon with a pyramiding superstructure that had seen action at Iwo Jima and Normandy. The *Nevada* had been turned out for Test Able like an old campfollower, painted scarlet and white so the boys on *Dave's Dream* would know exactly where to drop their beanbags.

The whole thing was a little silly, Thenot thought as he obediently fastened on his gas mask for the dress rehearsal. Who was kidding who? The flying boat didn't even have a pressurized cabin. When they flew through the real cloud, they'd be lapping up geigers like a celery stick soaking up dye. Someone in Radiological Safety was a real original for dreaming up these babies. Why didn't they issue umbrellas to stop the neutron bombardment while they were at it? Or how about some Japanese fans to bat the beta particles away? The nut of it was that Thenot actually felt a little safer wearing the damned thing.

The radio silence maintained to enable everyone to hear *Dave's Dream* was suddenly broken. Twenty minutes earlier they had said it would be thirty minutes before the first live bomb run. "Hey Dupa Juda, hey Dupa Juda — this is War Paint. Who wants to talk with me?" Pause. "I don't know about you ferndocks, but I'm going to scoop up a piece of bomb meat to hunker up the next pussy that tries to keep the change on my quarter. How 'bout it?" Silence. "You scientists got your scoops ready next to the alpha catchers? We gonna have a nuclear barbecue!" The reference to the alpha counters connected to the wind scoop of the flying boat brought a dry grin to Thenot's windburned face. Who the hell was that guy? "I'm going to sign off for *Dave's Dream*. You guys make sure you don't drop that fucking thing by accident, 'cause ol' War Paint's going on a five finger honeymoon with Dorothy Lamour. Over and out." Thenot watched Commander Marvy, the burly veteran that kept the boat flying, ease the plane well upwind from the target area. No one had interrupted War Paint: he was out of line and would be dealt with, but getting on the air meant two violations, and yours was the second one. Marvy set the ship under automatic pilot and everyone strapped on the goggles that would protect their eyes on July first from the tremendous flash of ultraviolet radiation which the bomb would produce in the first few millionths of a second. "Bomb away. Bomb away. Bomb away." *Dave's Dream* signalled and Marvy, Thenot, Cuddy, and Beandip waited. Commander Marvy finally spoke up over the drone of the engine. "This beats hell outa those kamikaze pilots, boys. Four grown men, no hands on the wheel, flying through a nu-cular blast blindfolded. I get the feeling somebody in Washington doesn't like us." Thenot was glad to pull his goggles off and relax. He listened to the hum of the engines and the sporadic clicks which served to register background cosmics on the Geiger-Müller counters.

Suddenly the plane began to dive. "Look out, boys, some tacos got two legs and some bombs can walk," Marvy shouted as they flew over the white hospital ship *Bountiful* that comprised part of the huge observation fleet located just outside of the anticipated blast area. He circled a few times, lower and lower, trying to blow the skirts of the nurses up with the wind he was creating, but all for naught. Thenot, at least, couldn't see a damned thing. Beandip jumped on the radio: "Let's try this on the first, and every nurse who's knocked up will give birth to a jar of iced tea or sumpin'." Marvy laughed, a raucous, phlegmy chuckle: "Beandip, don't you ever think of nothing except food, drink, and babies?"

"I wouldn't mind drinking some of that iced tea, skipper."

"... So your grandpa spent a lot of nights on Ebeye swimming and watching sand crabs run along the beach and crawl into their holes. There wasn't much to do then: I had more work after the bombs went off, especially the second one, Test Baker, which was to be exploded underwater. As you might expect, Timmy, the blast fired underwater would give off a lot more radiation."

"Because the cloud couldn't go as high up?"

"Well, that's right, Timmy. The underwater shot, we knew, would have a lot of radiation absorbed in the water when it went off, and that would all fall on the ships and back into the sea. Boy, I knew even before the first shot that this was going to create a real mess and make those islands a rotten place to live for quite some time. I guess a lot of us knew it, but we kept on preparing for the tests. I think deep down we figured those islands were a kind of prize the army and navy picked up for licking the Japanese."

"Did the natives like you guys? What did they think of the atom bomb?"

Thenot paused and gazed to the clock on the mantle.

"They liked us fine, I guess — as individuals. I actually visited an island called Rongerik after Test Baker, the underwater one, with a real lunatic named War Paint. He had some puzzling dealings with the natives by way of a cargo cult runner named Bodine, I think. Natives in the cargo cult believed that planes or ships would return to their atolls bearing products of modern civilization that would remove any need for physical labor. These guys would get jewelry, souvenirs of the Statue of Liberty, Kentucky bourbon, a few useless appliances like toasters and steam irons, plastic Jesus statues that could glow in the dark, chewable wax goofy teeth and moustaches, anything really, and trade it to the natives for the coconut drink that made your grandpa sick, native crafts and clothes, you name it. Suckers on both ends kept the market going. I first met War Paint on Ebeye sitting in a restaurant called the REST RANT because some of the neon had burned out. There we were on Rongerik, War Paint and I, supposedly to investigate the radio-activity being spread around by fish moving away from Bikini. We could take x-rays of these unfortunate fish just by laying them on a photographic plate. War Paint decided to drop off a load of chocolate bars while he was there. He had the bars carefully packed in an alpha-counter crate, a piece of equipment which looked official but wouldn't actually be used after the immediate explosion. He snuck off and came back a few hours later, visibly shaken. He said he had made a good trade, but that we had better leave. On the boat back, he withdrew a little sack from his pocket. The sack contained a really fine collection of pearls. Seems the natives wanted him to bribe the God of the Cloud to clean up their home island, to remove His poison so that they could return. They already missed Bikini, and were not encouraged by the vague double-talk Radiological Safety was giving them. It was sort of sad — this was the only way they knew to alter what looked like a pretty bad deal. Who wants a paid vacation if you can never return home? War Paint took the pearls, but the joy of trading left him soon after that."

"What happened to him then, grandpa?"

"What happens to a lot of men who do something bad — it's just like radioactivity, it slowly seeps within their bones and the next thing you know they get sicker and sicker and finally you can't tell which does them in sooner, their body or their mind."

Timmy would never get to hear anymore about War Paint, the salty carrot-topped seadog that ended up at an atomic test site because someone must have sneezed over his papers at the Pentagon. He thought too much for a career sailor, and that eventually put him under. It all started in the Bikini lagoon, when he had been assigned to clean up one of the still-floating target ships, the carrier *Independence*, after Test Baker. They were sandblasting, scrubbing down, trying all the old navy cleanup tricks in lead suits that slowly cooked you on the midday deck. All to no avail. Radiation was a tar-baby that generated two messes for each one solved. War Paint had been bragging about some trick performed with ping-pong balls that he once saw performed in Mexico. He interspersed his story with hefty tugs on a cable that dangled over the side. The cable broke and tore his hand right through the safety gloves.

Thenot was called upon to give him a quick once-over search for those dreaded geigers. The wound bled well enough and seemed pretty clean. All preliminary investigation gave War Paint, Ensign John Bundren, a clean bill of health. He could even go back onto clean-up after Thenot had bandaged him up.

Things seemed okay with War Paint after that, except Thenot thought he boasted a little bit too much. The pearls and the wound kind of coalesced in his mind in some grim, private signification. "Test Able, pearls, Test Baker, damn wound," he began to mutter

at the REST RANT. Once War Paint ran into Cuddy, Beandip, Thenot, and Marvy on a typically moonlit and windy Ebeye night. The size of the bottle of *jugaroo* he carried on his back left no doubt that he had made a very successful trade of some sort. Cuddy asked him what was up.

"Traded some pearls of parlay, real beauties," War Paint confided. "Care to drink up the profits with me?" Everybody agreed it was a helluva good idea for a Friday night, although Marvy wished he could have snapped his fingers and turned the *jugaroo* into peppercorn vodka. A few glasses later, they started talking about the two shots, and how nobody ever really talked much about them compared to events before and after. They were some kind of limit Operation Crossroads had approached and had receded from. The moments of the blasts had a special kind of unreality, like at a scientific magic show. The main thing everybody remembered about the first shot was the tawny-pink color of the cloud climbing up to 35,000 feet like an ascending thunderhead. Marvy allowed as the most remarkable thing about that test was hearing the background clicks of the random *cosmics* alter into wave after wave of radioactivity, soothingly ordered in its dissemination.

The second test was a lot wilder, all agreed. Cuddy and Thenot argued about whether the flash that preceded the huge column of water was red or white. Marvy swore it was violet-purple.

"Zeero Owah, O Zeero Owah, let me count the ways," a somewhat besotted War Paint interjected. "I'll tell you boys a story that happened on one of the other flying boats. They were flying through the cloud after Test Baker, staring at that puke green stain left on the water by the dye in the ships used to mark the movement of the water after the shot. Their Geiger-Müllers picked up a strong constant signal that lasted a quarter mile, half mile away from the target area. Those boys 'bout shit a brick. They started tearing up the plane trying to find a hole or something where a bit of the goddamn cloud could've seeped in. Finally everybody on the plane heard Talbot, the pilot, laughing. What do you think it was?"

Marvy, Cuddy, Thenot, Beandip shrugged their shoulders.

"A goddamn jellyfish, Portuguese man-o-war that fell splat against the upper wind-shield of their plane." He paused dramatically. "Gentlemen, I propose a toast: to the fucking new world we live in where jellyfish and ship cables can kill you in silence. Praise God there are older snakepits than that around for old-fashioned horny drunks marooned on unpronounceable atolls conducting absurdly devastating experiments."

The men laughed and drank. Humor, liquor, good company, it was these things that reminded them of the more mundane elements in their lives, these things that allowed one to form a pearl of benevolent memory around the gritty edge-experience of Able and Baker tests.

Humor, liquor, good company. Those were War Paint's effective incantations and Thenot recalled how he had ridden them into the ground. What were War Paint's parting words to him when he had disembarked from the *U. S. S. Haven* in Frisco harbor? "So long, Doc. If you ever return to Ebeye, say hello to my liver for me."

The clock on the mantle indicated it was one minute to midnight. Grandpa Thenot smiled. Timothy was finally asleep. He brushed the child's soft blonde hair away from his eyes; he then lifted the children, one by one, back into the bedrooms, away from the dwindling fire that began to carry a drafty breeze down the chimney, a harbinger of the swirling snow outside.

SUN

The alarm clock buzzed promptly at 6 a.m. and wrenched Richard Edwards from a deep, drugged sleep into the gray morning light misted by a tranquilized stupor. He rose and stumbled to the window to search for the sun which, he found, still refused to emerge, as it had for the past two weeks. He looked for a moment over the groggily awakening city into an endless expanse of gray, then rubbed his aching temples and walked to the bathroom to shave and shower. This was his favorite time of day; it was the only time (when he was conscious) that his painfully contemplative mind was unable to torment him with its endless unanswerable questions. He secured these moments by taking increasingly large doses of tranquilizers each night.

As usual, however, his brain lurched once again into motion with the first shock of cold water from the shower. First, he began to dread the endless routine of the coming day. Richard was a philosophy professor at a large university in Chicago. He had gotten his degrees while still very young and now, at 30, had achieved some recognition both as a teacher and a writer. But he had quickly become bored with his work and had come to view each day as a punishment of hard labor. His next wave of thought arose from this dread as he began to ask himself what the purpose of all this was. Though he struggled simply to live the life that would give him the greatest possible satisfaction, he continually sought for a larger justification for life and always came up empty-handed. With this emptiness nagging at his thoughts, he stepped from the shower, got dried off and dressed, and took two small black capsules in an attempt to lighten his mental burden.

Half an hour later, descending in the elevator from his eighth floor apartment, Richard's pulse began to quicken and his head became lighter. His thoughts remained troubled but he began to mind much less. He got in his car and lit a joint which began its healing effect almost immediately. By the time he reached the university, ten minutes late for his first class, the gnawing in his brain had retreated to a darker corner where it nourished itself on his subconscious.

Richard entered the noisy classroom assuredly, as usual, and was pleased with the speed with which the chaos yielded to an impatient but respectful quiet. His comparative youth, vast achievements, and self-assured demeanor won him much admiration and respect from his students. They admired from a distance, however, as a result of his own introspective air. To his students, he always seemed as though in another world. He gave his lectures, which were often unorganized and rambling in spite of their brilliance, and this was the extent of his interaction with his classes.

As the day progressed, Richard took six more pills and gradually slipped into a state of stupefied satisfaction. When he returned home that evening he ate a sandwich for dinner and then sat down to prepare for the next day's classes. He could remember the time when he would become blissfully and completely absorbed in his studies during these hours of preparation. But now he dreaded the evenings and the constant struggle they brought as he battled against the emptiness in his heart and the pounding in his head — a battle he was slowly losing.

In the dim glow of the single lamp that lit his apartment, Richard's mind began to wander from the words of Hume on the page before him. Piercing flashes of light threatened to shatter the drug shadows that shielded his mind in a protective cloud and the room's silence roared in his ears. He fought desperately to focus on the page before him and make some sense of the words, but the ink blurred and the page reeled.

With a choked sob of despair, he flung himself back into his chair and clutched his pounding head. Though he knew he had taken too many pills today already, he got up and ransacked his desk drawer for something, anything, to relieve his agony. He found some large white tablets and swallowed four of them, without water, then fell onto his bed. After some twenty excruciating minutes, a numbness began to overtake his limbs, which gladly succumbed. The blinding pain in his head became a dull throbbing ache and he began to sort his thoughts.

He tried to go back in his experience to the time when he had first begun to feel the aching emptiness that had continued to grow until he had found it necessary to resort to drugs, which, in the beginning, temporarily relieved his pain, but eventually had come only to make it somewhat more bearable and this only for very short periods. He remembered his high school and college days when questions about the nature and meaning of existence had been a joyful fascination. He eagerly read the discourses of every philosopher he studied and found their answers fascinating. Eventually, however, he began to realize that even the proposed answers of these great men failed to satisfy him. Though he didn't give it much thought for many years, he was always aware in the back of his mind that he simply could not justify this seemingly pointless existence, but he struggled furiously to maintain . . . Said Descartes, "I think, therefore I am." Okay. I'll give you that. But WHY am I? I have been placed in this wasteland of life to suffer and be happy. For every force there must be an equal but opposite force, for every joy an equal but opposite pain. No pain, no pleasure. But that did not have to be so. Man was created with the power of choice. He chose to suffer. But I did not choose. I am a man. You say men have the power to choose, then tell me the choice has already been made. True, you were guilty of sin from the moment of your conception but you have chosen not to redeem yourself of this sin in life. But it is HUMAN NATURE to sin. I do not remember choosing to sin. It is only memory that makes it so and I do not remember so I did not so I can't be but I AM. Why do you always evade the real question this way? You tell me why I act as I do, how I feel, who I am, what I am, that I am, but you never answer me. I beg you to tell me. WHY?

Because.

Slowly the room began to fade behind the ball of light in the center of Richard's vision. He stared dumbly into the light as he moved slowly toward it.

Richard awoke about 3:00 a.m., with a pounding headache. For a few moments, he lay perfectly still on the bed hoping the throbbing would cease. When it did not, he sat up. His eyes were immediately blinded by a white light and the blood roared in his ears. When his vision had cleared a bit he stumbled to the bathroom and took three white tablets, then went into the living room where he sat in a chair before the window, gazing over the sleeping city. His drug-stunned brain converted all the light messages from his eyes into blurred, trailing streaks smeared across the black void of the window. Waves of nausea began to wash over his body and he realized he had taken a dangerously large number of depressants. He began to wonder if he would die and actually hoped he would. Death would either answer his question or make him forget to ask it. Either position seemed better than continuing to go through the motions of hurting in life for some un-justified cause which might well be no cause at all, but just a stage of infinity into which one is carelessly brought and from which one would eventually just as carelessly depart, one passing instant of consciousness surrounded on all sides by blissful nothingness.

As the next three hours crawled painfully past, Richard came to realize that this pleasant fate was not to be his as he had more than half hoped. Rather, the agony returning to his temples was all too clearly the sentence being passed upon him condemning

him to yet another day of the gnawing dissatisfaction that was rapidly eating away the self-assured being of his past. In an attempt to escape his tormenting self-contemplation, he turned his thoughts to the business of preparing for another day. But his thoughts and actions were stumbling and undirected at best.

With an enormously concentrated effort, Richard managed to drink a cup of coffee and eat a piece of toast. He took a couple of tranquilizers in an attempt to silence the white noise that now completely numbed his senses. He knew he needed to shower and change before his classes, but the mere thought of doing so overwhelmed him with its complexity. Instead, he sat in a chair by the window staring fixedly out into still another gray morning, which gradually faded into a black nothingness, too sweet to last for long.

Suddenly, he was wrenched from the blackness by a blinding red light and found himself running furiously down an endless street, but making no progress at all. Looking back over his shoulder, he saw he was being pursued by a desperate mass of hideously mangled and deformed people crying out to him pitifully, terrifyingly, moaning his name and begging for words of wisdom to save them. From this group emanated a blazing heat and Richard thought he would surely be engulfed in flames in a matter of seconds. Looking ahead again, he saw an ever receding blinding white light toward which he ran in vain.

Just as he felt the flames beginning to consume the back of his shirt, he woke to the sound of his own scream dying in his ears. His heart was racing and his head pounding. He searched his mind frantically for the thoughts that tormented him, but a mist of grogginess was surrounding them so quickly that he could not recapture the experience. He was left only with a nauseating terror and the white noise roaring in his head.

Gradually, he began to try to calm himself and think of more practical things. He looked at his watch and found that he was thirty minutes late for his first class and would have to hurry to get to the school in time for the second. He stumbled blindly about the room, trying to gather his materials for class. On the way to his car his senses began to clear somewhat and he felt slightly revived by the cool air. He drove recklessly with the car windows down and became much less frantic and terrified by the time he reached the university. But his original gnawing sense of fear and restlessness were now magnified to an almost unbearable point and the white noise roared relentlessly in his brain, obscuring both sight and sound. He now had lost all recollection of his vision half an hour before.

For the next two weeks, each day seemed to slither endlessly past and the young professor's students watched him recede slowly into himself. His lectures became shorter and he eventually came to allow his students to use their class time reading while he gazed blankly toward the endless gray outside. The infinite, colorless void he saw there seemed to him a mirror image of the emptiness he felt rapidly obliterating his inner being. He had increased his intake of tranquilizers so that his external senses had become completely paralyzed and now the only sensations he was aware of were the relentless gnawing of helplessness in his stomach and the roaring of white noise that raged in his brain. His complete revulsion to food had revealed the bones in his face, causing him to appear as a mere skeleton.

Though Richard had been aware for several months that a great change was taking place within him, a vague, nauseating change, he had never before been able to realize exactly what the alteration was or where it came from. But during the last two weeks he had actually been able to feel the transition within him. He felt his mind trying desperately to grasp the infinity unattainable to the finite physical brain. As his mind began to

dominate his being more and more, he found himself increasingly outside of his tangible being and his heart began to petrify from lack of use.

The month of February came to a close, leaving Chicago in the same blank grayness it had worn every day. Richard occasionally roused himself from his perceptual paralysis for an instant, only to wonder if he could remember what the sun looked like.

On Friday, February 29th, Richard drove home through the crowded boulevards between the university and his apartment, seeing the entire time no further than the windshield of his car. He parked and walked to the elevator and then to his apartment, dumbly and mechanically. In the apartment he went straight to the chair he had occupied almost constantly for the last two weeks and sat facing the picture window looking out over the fading city. He lit a cigarette, from which he took one draw, and then became oblivious to its presence in his hand as it gradually burned away and disintegrated into a cold gray two-inch ash.

During the next twelve hours, Richard did not move one muscle, save the ones that caused his lungs to breathe and the rigid substance of his heart to beat against its will. But his mind kept trudging slowly, but incessantly, through the grayness, which gradually faded to a black with no spark of light to mark its end, pleading softly at every step but no longer expecting an answer, "Why, why, . . ."

At 6:30 a.m., a violent twitch of every muscle in his body jerked Richard from his paralysis and every sense became acutely aware. The unbroken blackness of the sky and the complete silence of the room became as tangible objects, as solid as the chair against his body. At that instant a huge, flaming orb rising directly before him bathed the world in a blinding white light that roared like a huge clap of thunder and instantly fused his separate senses into one magnificent sensation as he rushed toward the salvation embodied in the light. As he leapt, his mind was wrenched from his body and he heard for an instant, before he was consumed in the light, the tinkling of the shattered remnants of his physical will on the concrete of his heart. But the sound was immediately obliterated in one final and eternal deafening roar from his own throat — BECAUSE!

SUSAN MULLALLY



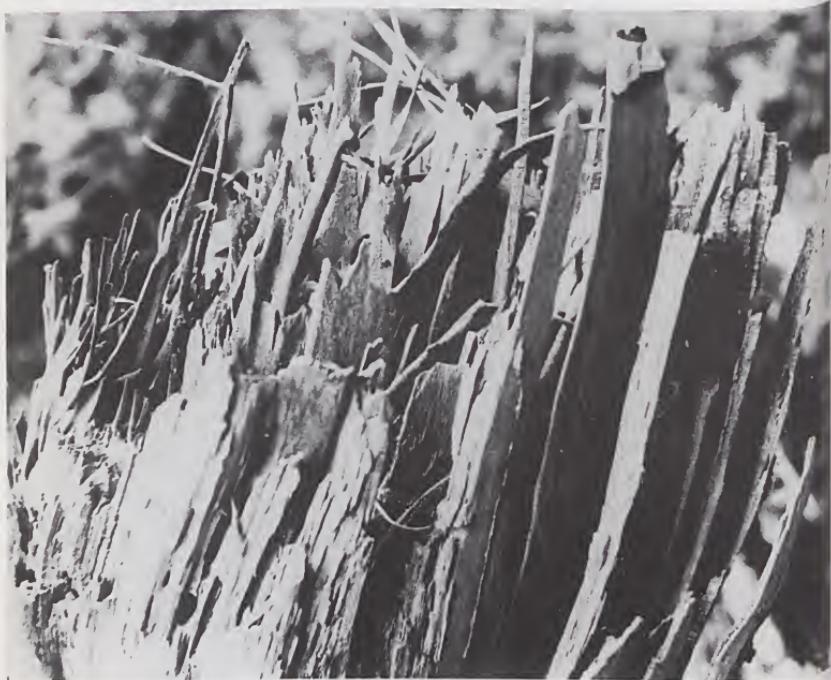
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Mushrooms



Stump



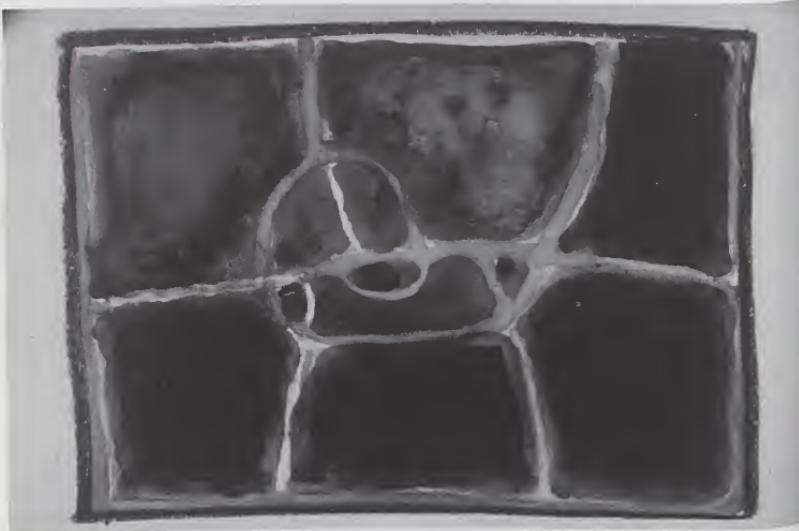
Wilmington Stockyard



Hindsight



Floating II



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WALTER RODGERS



Peaceful Sentinel

WALTER RODGERS

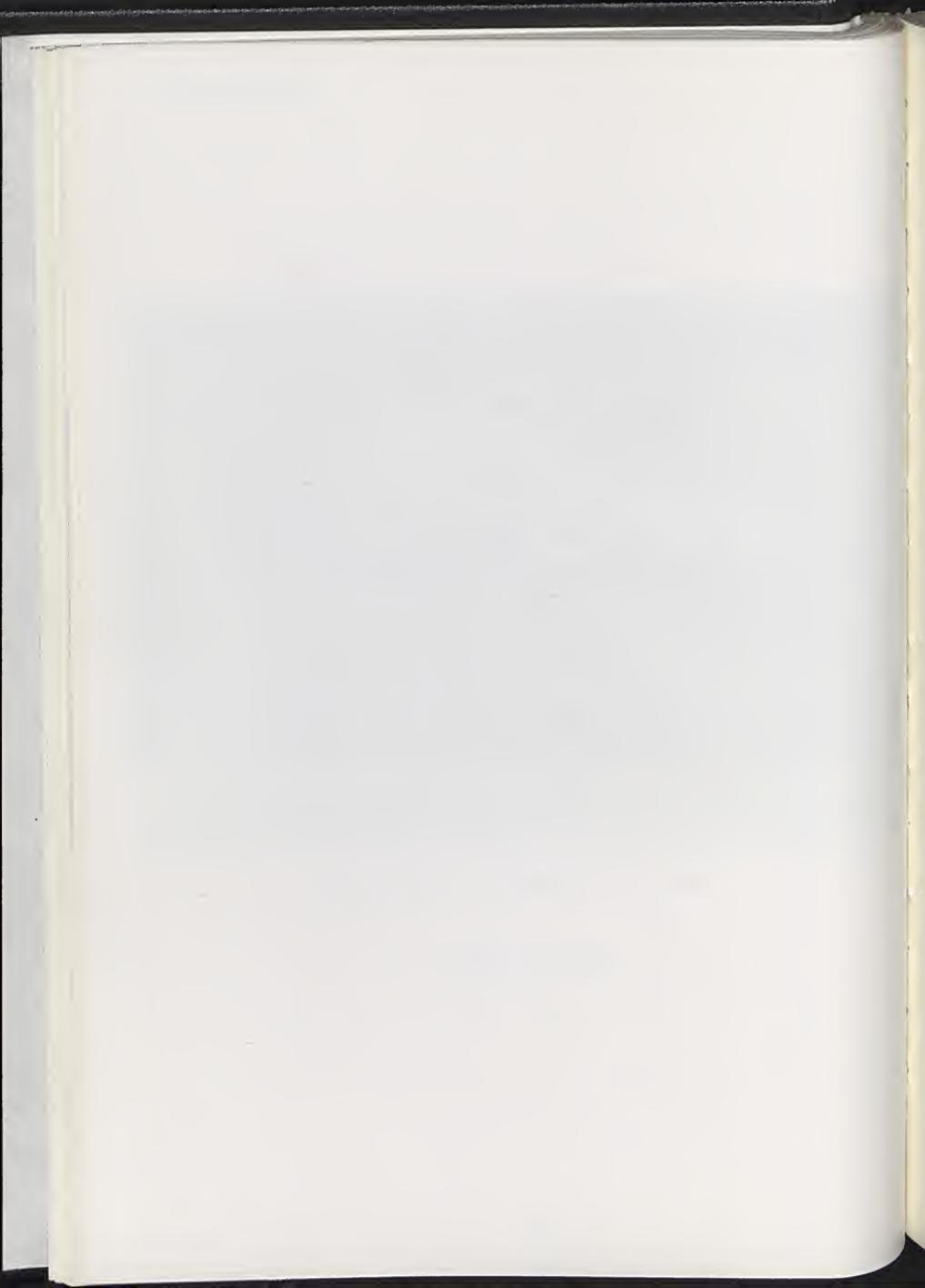


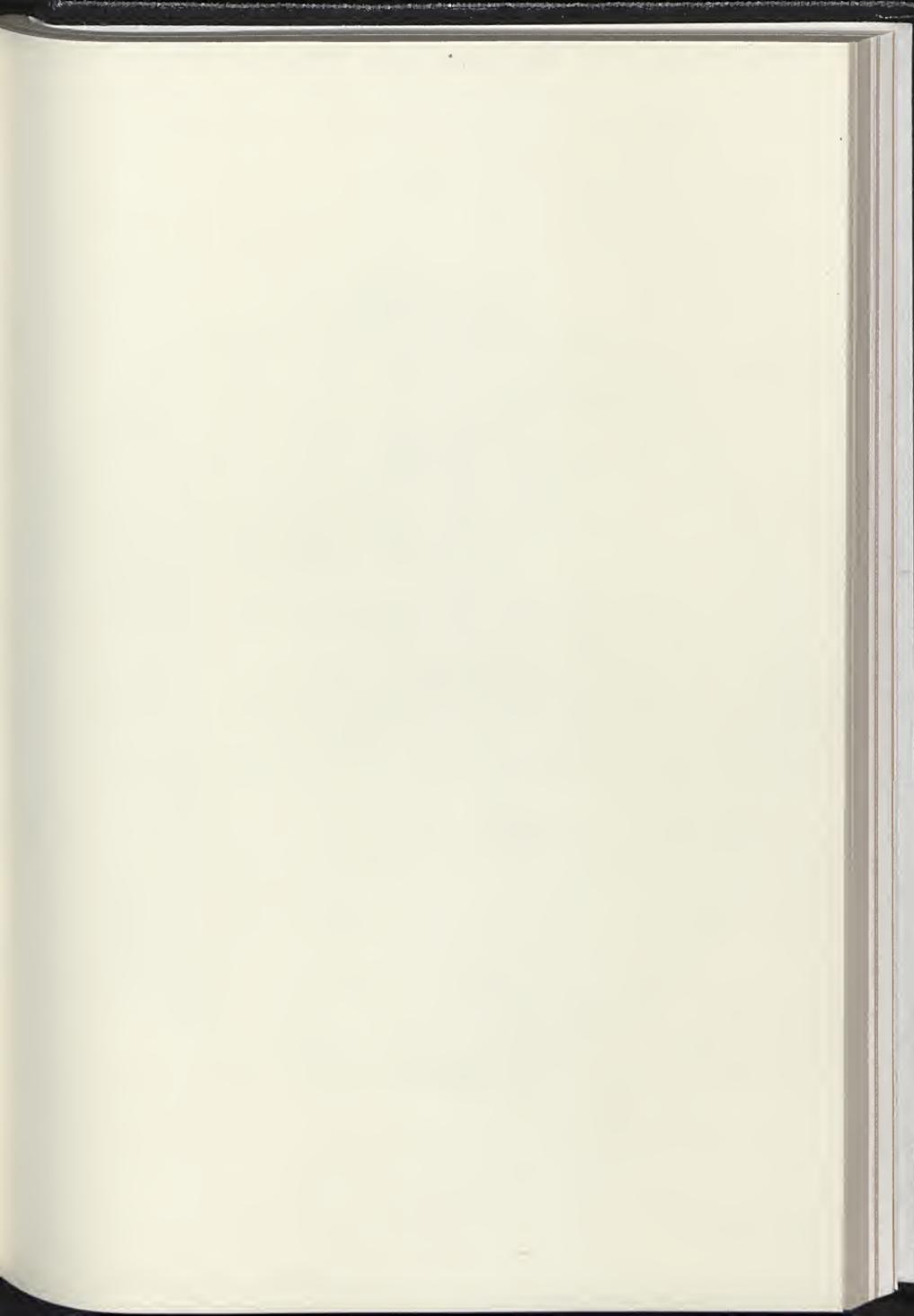
Rush Hour — Nashville, Tennessee

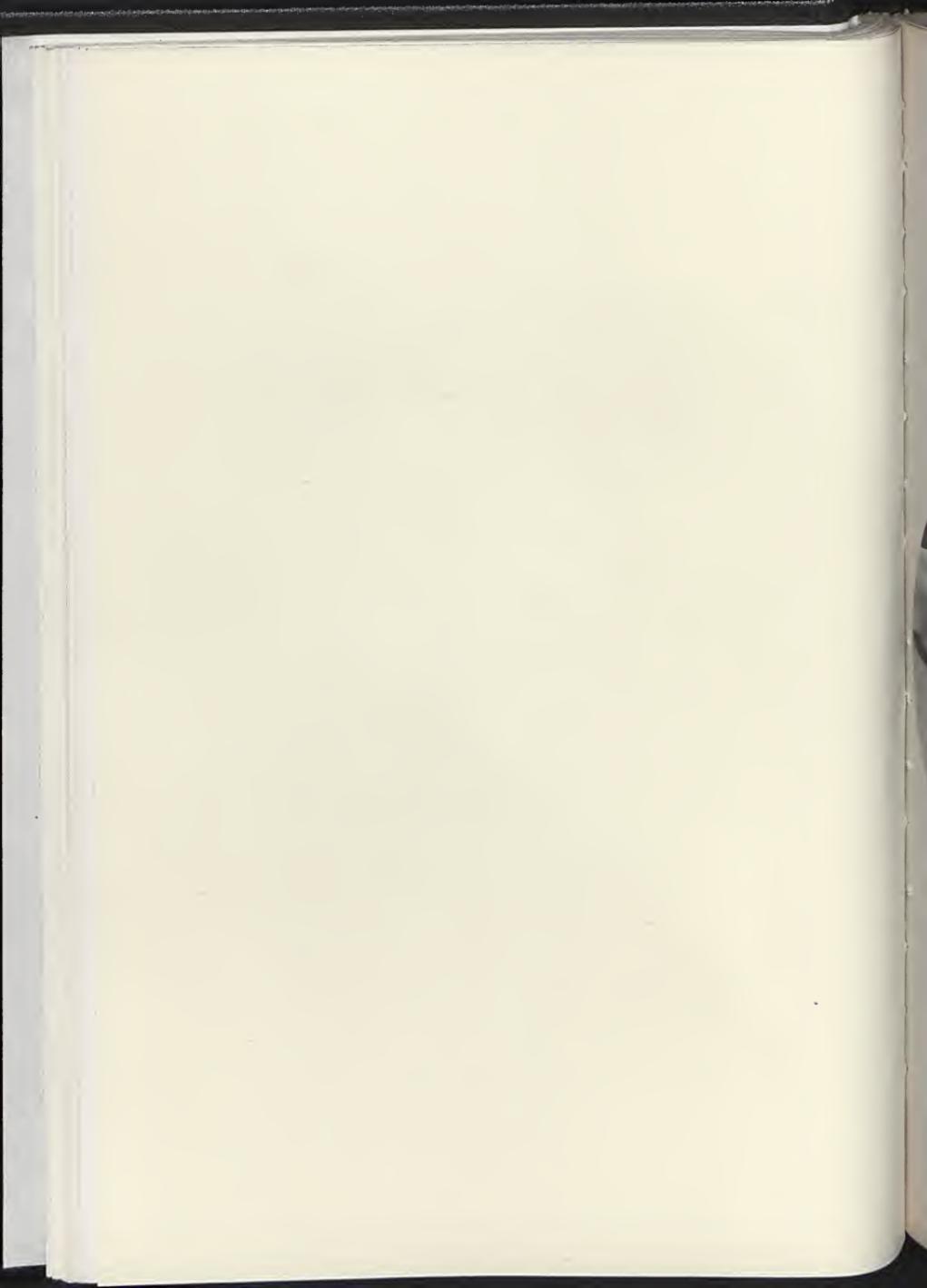


MONA HILBAWI

Breaking Away







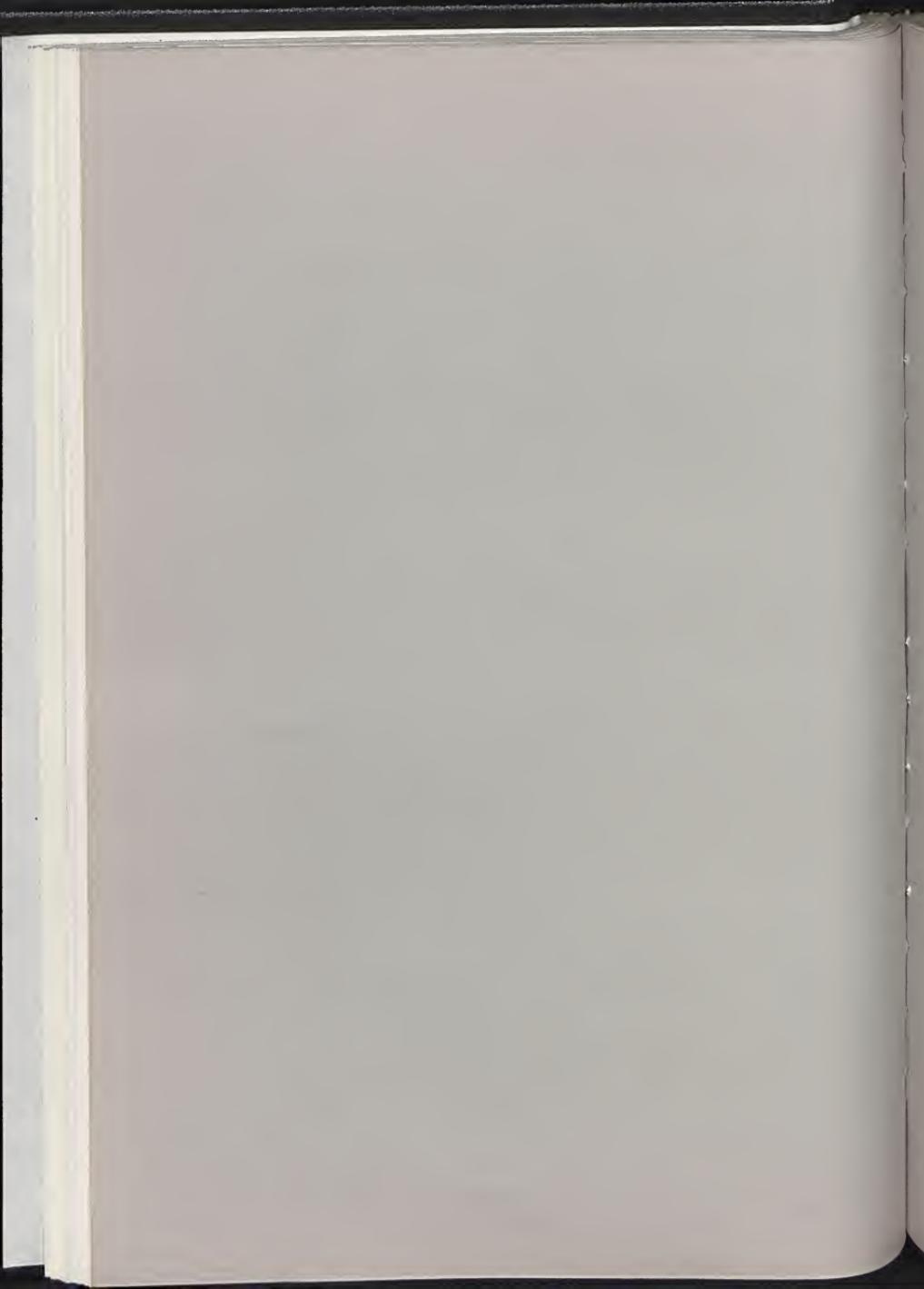


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Feature

“RAGE, RAGE. YES, YES.”

AN INTERVIEW WITH CZESLAW MIOSZ

by Dennis Manning and Robert Hedin

[This interview will be published in the 1985 Winter issue of the *Southern Review*.]

Czeslaw Milosz was born in Lithuania and is presently residing in Berkeley, California, where he is a professor of Slavic languages and literature at the University of California. Fascinated by the history, culture, and politics of his native land, Milosz claims his own poetry is the “consciousness of an epoch.” A collection of essays entitled *The Captive Mind*, explored the relationship between Communism and the creative faculty. Milosz was awarded the 1980 Nobel Prize for Literature. Last November, 1983, Milosz was invited to Wake Forest University by the Tocqueville Forum on Contemporary Public Affairs; he presented a lecture on the interplay of political activism and artistic integrity; he also gave a public reading of selections from his poetry. In the following interview, Milosz discusses the role of poets in modern society, the craft of poetry, and the development of a distinctly American poetic voice.



Photo by Susan Mullally

STUDENT: You have spoken of your tremendous reception upon your return to Poland a few years ago. I sense that in Poland poets are perceived in a much different light than they are in the United States. Here poets are looked upon as renegades, certainly not at the forefront, as you portrayed the poets of Poland.

MIOSZ: Yes, I guess. In Poland that was due to historical circumstances, especially at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, when Poland lost its existence as an independent state in Europe. That was the Romantic Era in European poetry. That was the era of the individual, as you know. And the poet precisely was considered to be an individual who was endowed with a leading role as a spiritual leader of a given nation. That role of romanticism explains much in this situation of the poet in Poland. Maybe here in America it is difficult to appraise properly the role of romanticism, which is not only a few decades, but embraces all of the 19th century.

Don't forget that 1848 was called “The Spring of Nations, The Spring of Peoples” in Europe. And that was the year when Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* appeared, which belongs to a purely romantic spirit. There is also the additional fact that romanticism is a very durable influence.

In England, of course, the prophetic role of a poet as a bard was addressed by Shelley. On the continent, Byron became a positive, individual hero who fought for the freedom of Greece, a committed poet of the world. And, of course, William Blake is very important. In France, you have a poet as bard, Victor Hugo. When Frenchmen are asked who is the greatest French poet, the answer: "Victor Hugo, helas!" Moreover, in Slavic countries, there is a tradition ascribing to words a very great importance. Maybe words or regularly modulated speech is more magical in Slavic countries than in the west, I don't know. This is very difficult. It probably has something to do with Slavic languages, or with a much longer rule of tradition in those countries. In any case, you probably know that in order to reconstruct what was poetry in ancient Greece, scholars in other centuries travelled to remote localities and recorded epic poems, recited and sung by all the people.

In any case, you are right. Poetry is highly regarded in Poland. In America, I guess, a peculiar isolation of the poet is due to many factors. Don't forget that poetry in America tried to be very committed in the 1930's. Little is left of that enormous proliferation of poems read at mass meetings and so on. So a rather individualistic poetry remains. For me, one of the most American and individualistic volumes of poetry is not only the poems of Emily Dickinson but also Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*.

STUDENT: You have mentioned how subjective American poetry is. Do you think this has something to do with it being so individualistic?

MILOSZ: Yes, those things for me are enigmatic, and I don't very well understand what happened. If you read Whitman — and I am a great admirer of Whitman — there was an enormous effort to grasp the external world. Whit-

man is nearly all a cosmic feeling, submerged by human civilization in America. So Whitman is just the opposite of withdrawal into the individual psyche. On the contrary, I don't know if you remember what D. H. Lawrence said of Whitman, that if Whitman learned that an Eskimo used a kayak, he would say, "I am an Eskimo, I am in a kayak." Omnivorous. And precisely for me I admire Whitman so much because I also feel omnivorous.

STUDENT: What do you mean, in "Ars Poetica?", that poetry is "dictated by a daimonion"?

MILOSZ: Well, by "daimonion" I mean what traditionally may be called a personal little demon who dictates you. I believe in inspiration. Being passive makes you an instrument. This I have had a feeling for throughout my life. Since very extraordinary things have happened in my life, and if I take my poems, I don't understand how they were written. I have to ascribe to the influence of my own personal demon.

STUDENT: You go on to say in the same poem that "What I'm saying here is not, I agree, poetry." What, then, is the medium?

MILOSZ: I guess this is an interesting sentence. I feel that today poetry is under a kind of blackmail on the part of all the theorists who are trying to make poetry different from prose: "This is true poetry, this is not true poetry." I know that American poets today try to overcome this. But, in my own experience, I felt the need to liberate from those requirements of what was considered poetry, to get a more free hand in order to say something. That is why I say in the poem, "Ars Poetica": "Yes, I can see this is not poetry. This is something else. I don't know what it is." Then I am much more free in writing.

STUDENT: What then do you look for in a good poem?

MIŁOSZ: I look for a considerable dose of reality. Not subjective states, feelings, emotions of a persona or a poet. But something palpable, a presence of palpable reality. If we take such poems as Whitman's "To a Locomotive in Winter," we find reality — a locomotive. If we take a poem like Cavafy's "Waiting for the Barbarians," we find a city — a situation, a historical situation. Amazingly, that poem, which seems to have been written in the middle of the twentieth century, was written in 1899.

STUDENT: And even the barbarians are a kind of answer, as Cavafy says.

MIŁOSZ: Yes.

STUDENT: You state that the poet of the twentieth century carries a burden of reality, and it is this burden that has made him, as you have said, "morally indignant." Given the horrifying events of our century, what kind of hope can the poet offer?

MIŁOSZ: This moral indignation is due to the fact that we know a lot of what is going on on the surface of the planet. And in the past a poet would limit himself to his village as far as his origin was going on. But I tried to answer that question of hope. In this respect a poet is no different from ordinary mortals, except that he has maybe some antenna directed toward the future. That is very enigmatic, as you know. The role of the poet as seer has been either enhanced by the people, by the poets themselves, or ridiculed. I am not ashamed to say I don't know when I do not know.

STUDENT: You conclude the poem, "Song on the End of the World," with a man busily tending his tomatoes. As he binds them, he recites: "There will be no other end of the world,/ There will be no other end of the world." Is this a vision of the poet rooting some sort of sustenance?

MIŁOSZ: No, I introduced that man for purely humorous effects. It's ironic. In the original the humor is more pronoun-

ced than it is in the translation. The point is that he would have been a prophet, but he is much too busy. For him, tending tomatoes is more important than being a prophet. The poem was written in Warsaw in 1943 in the midst of the Nazi occupation. There was war, and people were growing vegetables in the city itself. Warsaw is a city of many parks and gardens and open spaces. So, people were growing tomatoes, and that is maybe the influence, a picture of a real situation.

STUDENT: In the epigraph to *The Witness of Poetry*, which is taken from "The Rising of the Sun," there is a survivor who still carries a seed of hope and vision. At the end of the poem, you write: "Which means he knew what was needed for some ultimate moment/ When he would compose from fragments a world perfect at last." How does this differ from the conclusion of Eliot's *The Waste Land*? There the speaker is shoring up fragments against his ruins.

MIŁOSZ: Shoring up the ruins implies a mature, advanced age. In any case, the persona there has witnessed the destruction of the world — fragments, ruins. In my poem, there is a child whose world is not in pieces, and who has a sort of intuition that those things which he sees should be validated through an act of creation, an act of poetry, which is really a reconstruction of reality, of the world. It is a problem, really, of realistic art. But the reconstruction of things, ordered in a new way, becomes more logical than in nature, than in a natural state. So, this is a theory of intuition by the poet as a child.

STUDENT: In "Tidings" the persona concludes, about earthly civilization, that "nobody really knows what it was." The past tense disturbingly implies that earthly civilization has perished. What, if anything, has supplanted it?

MIŁOSZ: One attains a kind of distance by placing things in the past. There is another poem of mine from "The Rising

TIDINGS

Of earthly civilization, what shall we say?

That it was a system of colored spheres cast in smoked glass,
Where a luminescent liquid thread kept winding and unwinding.

Or that it was an array of sunburst palaces
Shooting up from a dome with massive gates
Behind which walked a monstrosity without a face.

That every day lots were cast, and that whoever drew low
Was marched there as sacrifice: old men, children, young boys and
young girls.

Or we may say otherwise: that we lived in a golden fleece,
In a rainbow net, in a cloud cocoon
Suspended from the branch of a galactic tree.
And our net was woven from the stuff of signs,
Hieroglyphs for the eye and ear, amorous rings.
A sound reverberated inward, sculpturing our time,
The flicker, flutter, twitter of our language.

For from what could we weave the boundary
Between within and without, light and abyss,
If not from ourselves, our own warm breath,
And lipstick and gauze and muslin,
From the heartbeat whose silence makes the world die?

Or perhaps we'll say nothing of earthly civilization.
For nobody really knows what it was.

of the Sun" where at a given moment I speak of myself as a voyager, somebody who comes from another solar system, because time relegated into the past all the cities, all the places I knew in my childhood, my youth. So this is an effort at distancing myself, looking from outside, out of civilization. Whether it is true that this civilization really belonged to the past, or whether it will be supplanted by something else, I don't know.

STUDENT: You have said the past holds the key to our enigma, that through a historical consciousness we can be moved to a more visionary state. What kind of burden of responsibility does this place on the poet's shoulders?

MIŁOSZ: Well, I should say it happens on an anthropological dimension, because if we look from a perspective of the last century, we see a great difference in awareness of what life for previous generations was like. Take what Rome was like, for instance, the life of the Caesars, and main events, Julius Caesar describing wars and so on. But today we are flooded by images of the past in the works of the historians, anthropologists, in art, in the movies; we see a reconstruction of old fashions, of epochs. That's a kind of historical consciousness not limited to events. On the contrary, I should say the historical awareness now is rather in decline, because we have a short memory. I witnessed many events in this century, and when I talk to young people these are not even dates. The past epochs — the taste, the aroma — certainly entice people, and they even strive for the re-living of lives of the past generations, sort of reincarnate these past epochs in art and poetry. And so I feel the poet here is a very important personality. Maybe I am influenced by peculiar traditions in Poland as far as a kind of link, a bond, uniting the living and the dead. Today is November 2, All Souls' Day. If you go to Warsaw, there is an enormous movement of people all throughout the city. Every family goes to the cemetery. This is a communion be-

tween the living and the dead. Flowers. Everybody carries flowers in Warsaw. Flowers and lamps and so on. And they go to the cemeteries. And because Warsaw was a city which was completely destroyed in World War II, and lost 200,000 people in the uprising of 1945. Previously some half million Jews were deported and murdered in 1942-43. So this is a city reborn from ashes and built really now of ashes, which enhances this feeling of communion between the living and the dead. And so the memory of the past is very alive in Poland. Someone said there is no nation equally carrying the memory profoundly in its consciousness, or subconsciousness, as Poland is. So, maybe, in speaking of that bond with the past, I am influenced by my background.

STUDENT: Do you find America's lack of a cultural memory to be a disadvantage?

MIŁOSZ: I see that memory is preserved by works of literature, by works of poetry and by theater and by novels. If we take Poland, young generations are reminded when they go to the theater and they look at plays, topics alluding to historical events. Also, if we look at Russia, the Napoleonic Wars are extremely present through literature, through Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, through poetry and so on. In America, when I recently read the prose of Walt Whitman, about his stay in Washington, D. C., during the Civil War, I found fantastic and heart-rending topics. But hardly in poetry and in literature do you have traces of that, except maybe in a short novel, maybe written under the influence of Tolstoy, *The Red Badge of Courage*. In Faulkner, there is the Civil War rendered from the South, but I suspect Faulkner is not read very much in high school. So, the question of the Civil War was a crucial event for America, and a cruel event. It was probably the bloodiest war in the 19th century, bloodier than the Napoleonic Wars perhaps. It came, it seems to me, precisely at the moment of the beginning of the industrial revolution;

it obliterated very quickly; traces were overgrown with new social relationships, industrialization, movements to the cities. So there is a different attitude. There is a feeling of disinheritance, of course. Here we are talking in the South, and there is much more of a feeling of woundedness than in other parts of the country. But the majority of young Americans are cut off from the possible roots because of different backgrounds, immigration, not a purely native background.

Some of my poems are quite rooted in the past of my district in Lithuania, which has a history going back to the middle ages. There is an interesting Lithuanian encyclopedia in the Lithuanian language published in Boston where practically every locality of my district is enumerated, with information of what happened several centuries back. My family lived there since at least the 16th century.

STUDENT: I was just going to say that one of the curious things about America is that despite the country's strong desire to always keep moving out of itself, it seems to herald writers who have a tremendous sense of locale: Whitman, Frost, Jeffers, Steinbeck, and many of the poets in the Sixties like Robert Bly and James Wright and so on. It is quite an amazing list.

MILOSZ: That is a very good sign, in my opinion. There is probably a need for this because, as I said, man's imagination works geographically in the sense that a village in which he was born is the center. And in his imagination he situates those things, everything north, south, east, and west, in relation to the point where he was born. For me, the greatest difficulty in moving to America is that I have two points of reference. One, a village in which I was born and always the world was north, south, east, or west of that village. And another one where I live in Berkeley. It's a different north, south, east, or west. My imagination works on

two points of reference and how to combine them — a whole poetry can be built around them.

STUDENT: Is the poem "Encounter" set in that village in Lithuania?

MILOSZ: Yes, it was written a very long time ago. I was surprised that the poem still seems to work. That was in 1936, a very simple little poem. As it happens, very often, you write something accidentally. I remember I wrote three poems; this is one of the three. The others are not good. This one is the best. Yes. You know that poets sometimes write rather poor poems which either they do not publish or the poems are then eliminated by a rather natural selection, even after they are published. For me it was a great surprise when I discovered that Cavafy, who is an excellent poet, had written a lot of poor stuff before the period of his maturity, and also later.

STUDENT: Calisthenics?

MILOSZ: Yes, maybe calisthenics. Yes.

STUDENT: Getting back to the poem "Encounter," which commences *Bells in Winter*, the tone is of wonder and it sets the tone for the volume. Yet in the last poem in the collection, the persona laments, "I was judged for my despair." Does this mark a shift in tone — from perhaps "wonderment" to resignation on the part of the persona?

MILOSZ: I would say it is slightly misleading because those are translations. The word "wonder" in the first poem has an equivalent in the original, a slightly different tone. Maybe wonder. But more contemplation.

STUDENT: Not awe.

MILOSZ: Awe? No, the word in the original is closer to a melancholy reflection. Yes.

STUDENT: Your earlier work earned you the nickname "catastrophist." Can you explain why the term "catastrophist" and whether or not you think the

appellation valid? Has your more recent work earned you another name?

MIOSZ: I belonged to a group of poets called the "Catastrophists" because in our poetry there were visions of destruction, and a lot of pessimism as to the future of mankind. So, when World War II broke out, in Warsaw there was a new generation of poets who were very young — 18, 19, 20 — who regarded the poetry of catastrophe as prophecy. And they saw in our poetry the prophecy of war and annihilation, which was the Nazi conquest of Europe. By the way, those poets, practically all of them, perished under the Nazi occupation because of their activity in the resistance or fighting on the barricades in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Of course, I had an attitude toward their considering our poetry as a prophecy of what was going on. I had a rather skeptical attitude because our visions were larger. There was a foreboding of something horrible happening in the twentieth century. Well, to pinpoint, to say that was World War II, is not quite correct. Maybe our visions embraced atomic weapons. Who knows? In any case, I have often defined myself later as a Catastrophist Emeritus.

I wouldn't like to be interpreted here as someone who now prophesies the universal annihilation through nuclear arms. I find the preoccupation with that problem on the part of American poets as slightly morbid.

STUDENT: You have stated that hope is embodied in the poet and intuitive in the poem. Could you talk of this further?

MIOSZ: I guess it is correct to say that every poetry is directed against death — against death of the individual, against the power of death. That's why I was so angry a few years ago when I read a poem by Philip Larkin on death, a desperate poem about the lack of any reason — about the complete absurdity of human

life — and of our moving, all of us, toward an absurd acceptance of death, which is true. But the poet shouldn't do that. The poet shouldn't take a passive attitude — how do I explain, it is very difficult — an attitude of complete submission to the absurdity of human existence. Dylan Thomas speaks of the death of his father: "Do not go gentle into that good night . . ." That is a masculine attitude, and not a passive acceptance of the absurdity and, I would say, effeminate love of the nonsense of human existence. Not love. This is not the right word. A kind of recognition of the complete absurdity of human life and death. And this I do not agree. Poetry can not agree with that. Poetry is directed against that. You feel a difference in tone: "Do not go gently . . ." Yes? Between this and Philip Larkin's poem?

STUDENT: In your poem "The Fall," the persona claims that the death of a man will not bring relief nor will death bring about an "alliance," as you term it. What, then, is the "death of a man . . . like" in more literal terms than those you have employed in the poem?

MIOSZ: Here in this poem, at least, I say that the death of a man is like the fall of a powerful state. The death of a man acquires a great dimension.

STUDENT: In the city, I believe, you compare it to, there are no friends and no alliances. It is a very desolate image.

MIOSZ: Yes, it is a pretty desperate poem. But it is a despair full of rebellion. I feel that despair can be full of rebellion, or just a passive consternation. Nihilistic. So I would defend my poem as an active despair.

STUDENT: Akin to Dylan Thomas' "Rage, rage, against the dying . . ."

MIOSZ: Rage, rage. Yes, yes. Precisely.

Poetry

This poem will be published in the 1984 Spring issue
of the *Michigan Quarterly Review*.

HOMMAGE À GERTRUDE

Old hulk, splay-hammed
and hunkered comfortably
while the tailor tacked
around you, calculating
your dimensions for another copy
of the same old skirt —

fitted while sitting, to assure you ease
in this most characteristic of your postures —

practical: by whose couture conceal
the lump God sunk your spirit in?
Better be plain, let body be matrix
for your crystal wit. Why drape a rock?
Skeletally delicate, your gravity would crack
to find *en fin* Stein adamant, modish.

ANIMADVERSION

Teodor Adorno, an Austrian and musicologist,
Member of the Frankfurt School: "To write
Poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric."
But good Teodor, about the music?
Without it there will be more corpses.
Without those words flying about
What can you expect to fly into your
Bedroom? while you are there alone?
Pah! I'll praise the kitchen, the AM
Radio, the rug on the floor of vulgar
Color, jeeez, the garbage in the pail —
And the words that put them all there.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON IN THE BACKROOM

Well, hippie Johnny is sprawled across
the couch newspaper over his face
we think he is
alive
the paper moves every once in
awhile
either Johnny is breathing or the NY Times
is
Billy D. whose hair is growing back
tells stories to the floor he's got this
friend see
they're gonna play guitars in sad cafes
maybe meet some girls &
Caroline spit shines
her hightops whistles a song
for a decaying society
picks some lint off her trenchcoat while
Kris smokes
one more
another more the
tv blares
Jr. talks no one listens
Gulls doesn't even
talk anymore except sometimes
Becky dances in the corner
lollipop in hand &
Scott sits on the pool table blows into his harp
makes it sing
I am so lonely
I am so lonely

Somebody wakes up hippie Johnny looking for the funny pages

NIGHTFALL ON A MIDWEST FARM

A single cow takes the lead,
Pushing her legs until feeling firm
In the knee-deep snow.
There is no mooing, there are no bells:
Just a silent single-file parade at dusk
Across the corn-stubble fields.

Their winter breath
Snouts out into billowing clouds
Warming the rump of each leading beast.
While the last in line,
Not needing the push,
Cuts an easy trail home.

VENICE HEAT

I

You have spoken such:
 and the little cats leave fish eyes
 behind to stare at the stirring flies —
 the heat has no fear of shade,
 the shadows full of slinky warmth,
 the air wilts around your face as you pass through.

You have said:
 hold your breath, as you turn to your side —
 street door
 and quickly step inside
 to avoid the rank smells form following.
 The voices are so heavy that they sink
 and form puddles,
 dragging at our feet.

II

The dampness of my skin —
 as when we have lain too long, too close to each other
 and our bodies' warmth is inescapable —
 the tired hanging on of moisture to every fold of my neck.
 To be suspended, exposed to the air from all sides,
 would be luxury.

III

Early morning smells of uncooked pasta,
 the taste of raw tortellini.
 The air filtered by ivy and chipping paint;
 the cats stretch, a long vibrato of the spine;
 the summer wanderers, asleep on the stairs of churches and old piers.
 The sun has risen, two hours high,
 showing the veins of clouds inside the sky's puffed cheek.
 There is found the only coolness of the day —
 still hiding in the corners before noon seeks it out.
 The marks of dampness seem as though there were rain
 last night on the walk where some mistress
 poured her wash water out the window.
 Across the canal, the mosaics of gold and blues seem even larger,
 as if they grew in this light.
 The first coughs of morning as the shutters are thrown open.

FUTURE LAWYERS IN EXILE

Not so much searching
since the unearthing
of Constantinople and Babylon.
Clawing, scraping
— trying to uncover
presaged existence.

That Dream
that was
is
not in venal
and moldering books,
but in the souls
of dreamers.

Torah.

“Meanwhile,” they say,
“the covenants that lead
laws
ferment on Sinai.
Let’s kill each other,
let us bite each other’s
golden calves
for the American Dream.

After all
who is there to reverse
us
to rule over us
in this wilderness?

Let us sing to dark the night
and pretend morning light
— let’s arrange marriages
in the name of

what we want
that we have not.”

Talmud.

“And God who knows,”
(hush)
(fear)
“maybe never will have.”

DISTILLATION

A sweat-soaked sheet
Filters birds' calls
From four A.M. darkness

Curled in a ball
Like the sun's rays
Which haven't stretched to day

My cousin with dyslexia
Calls me in a dream
(We had thrown rocks at bats
Under streetlights at dusk
And watched their near-sighted dives)

In a glass of melted ice
Beside the bed
I imagine the man of yesterday's headline
LOCAL REVEREND SEES WORLD THROUGH NEW EYES

Up at the mirror
I flick the switch
"on" squinting there
I comb damp hair
Seek cooler night clothes

Lifting the gown's hem
Over my head
The final airs of night
Dry my thighs, my belly
My nipples become taut
Titillation clothes my body
Like a snake with new skin
I am intimidated by my self

CANYONS

It's really a gaping wound
Across the road, officially scenic,
Ice cream and clean restrooms await.

Years before, I had stared at the 3-d
Aerial photograph, trying to make my eyes
Focus 3-d down the depth.

To do that now would mean brother Don, Steve Canyon,
Flight surgeon for the United States Air Force Thunderbirds,
Tanked up in the back seat of an F-4 Phantom

Barrelling through this place
At night, on the outside of the envelope,
Stars pinwheeling

Or earlier, their visit to our house
Rent-a-cars in V-formation on I-94
Scotch glasses in V-formation, one resting

On a child's book,
Martin Caidin's patriotic paperback history
Of these bold boys

They all died in V-formation, every one in that room:
Leader, Left Wing/Right Wing, Slot Pilot, Solo/Solo
All those good pilots, loose parakeet hitting a mirror,

Burnt flesh on the Nevada desert floor
And that ozone smell accident reporters hope
Is the fart of the soul.

Now my brother won't get his pilot's license, though well-qualified
For a living
Treats skin disorders in Waukeshha.

PACKAGES

That time Magic
Sacks of dirt below the trees
Fuel for those missiles
Standing, cocked on their posts as
if some formidable launching range.
At attention for Christmas
Dolls in rank and file
Buy Buy Buy
Shoppers march by
Wearing the uniform of halcyon days:
Mittens, leg warmers, scarves.
Magic

 is in the wrapping of a bagman's
Neck and beard — he carrying
No soft plum pudding in cheese cloth
but a paper bag full of "The Rose"
Making him soft and warm.
It is always this way —
Bright lights and acres
of monetary fantasies surround him.
So, wishing to desert this parade,
He sips his potion,
Folds self into self,
And magically disappears.

BALLOON FRAME

I

I do not think now
I will get the job
I brought my great
grandmother Martin
(a portrait) to the
office for company

meet me on your own
ground tell me some
story to think about
the kind Ed Hynes would
have laughed over, he was
a fine teller, builder

start wobbly
but soon balloon
frame takes strength from
its own filling out

roof trusses

roof trusses up
into the dusk

Angelica Jane
Dickinson Martin

THE DAY SOME KIDS RAPED
THE OLD LADY'S TOMBSTONE

I wonder if she flinched
Or did she die again
When the strong grey block
Broke into fine powder.

Perhaps she wasn't moved,
But had turned to wet soil
Feeding the world above
Both owl and serpent.

AMERICAN DREAM

In dusty stacks
I thumb
Faded reminders
Of Mr. Jones:
A businessman,
Doctor, lawyer, or scientist.
Owns a fast car.
His smile
Stares at me
From every page turn.
I feel lost in his gaze.
Outside
I find
The grass yellowed
And the wind
An air brush
Decorating every face.

THE COLDEST NIGHTS

Christmas eve in New York

The wind had swept the delusion from our faces and hands —
but we went to Mass anyhow.

And after to the party.

I faced her there.

She was twenty-nine,
just about to tumble down the other side of what,
for fear, I won't conceive.

She boasted to having seen the movie eleven more times than I.

Bing Crosby taught us that our days should be Mary
— that was her name;

I reminded her of the fact.

She reminded me that her husband had died
for his sins.

The flesh longs for a bed from the moment it begins to feel.

“You have a face like an angel.”

There was clinging, envelopment and pain;

Choked words, torn eyes

Palaver and blankets

Touches like Glaciers

that made me shake despite myself.

“These are the coldest nights I've ever known.”

I tried to give the warmth that wasn't there,

and with mockery stop the shaking,

and did well,

considering I wasn't really there,

but in the bathroom —

confessing to the winter of my mind.

“Bless me.”

And it was over.

“Just as it was . . .”

When light exposed us, I bowed my head to my knees.

She hoped at having done the right thing

— that Mary.

I was only sixteen, after all.

I tried to think of what Gabriel would have said.

“I had a good time last night.”

The bathroom walls refused to absolve.

Because in the end, I laughed,

and spit out the window at the snow.

Daytime is never so cold.

MOURNING DOVES WALKING

Two grave doves walk the lawn, down
between two buildings,
under one black tire swung vacant
in the late day sun,
to two white oaks
green in a glancing light
with sooted trunks, ridged, dove-
grey. The doves move,
dipping, beyond, to deep grass
lush where the mower missed,
then go. They leave no wake,
no track, on concrete,
on dirt flattened
beneath the tire, on grass.
Their light weight traces on earth no thing
as they breast the light
that seals behind them
as their feathers sheathe.
I see their fine progress,
wish, engrossed, to leave
no evidence, not even that
of vacancy, to move off
with the light gravity of doves.

ANOTHER EPITHALAMIUM

Let me put this down straight at the beginning.
A man that I love marries the woman he loves
tomorrow. The serious practicality of this
frightens me. A difficult love is the best.
This is my terror in the face of all beginnings.

Dinner tonight with People, basta! Beginning
at six or so they wandered in — I imagine this —
I myself arrived late and drunk. I like them best
after they've left me to tell over their loves
alone here making my own small beginnings.

Throw out the garbage and make a beginning!
Empty the ashtrays, ya ho! To bed! But best
I'm putting together a Soup Stock, my loves,
would kill you all if you "dropped by" after this.
I've got other things on my mind, distant beginnings.

Alien objects forced together for each beginning.
Here, orts, talking statues, scarfed ladies, their loves,
there a man and a woman, which I make model of this.
They jostled and clanked — which I like — yet best
is the harmony endings make of all beginnings.

THIS IS ABOUT LANE WHO OFTEN WEARS A TRENCHCOAT
AND BLUE SOCKS SOMETIMES

I like him: black hair spilling from his forehead
 ashes spilling from his cigarette
throws these crazy smiles across the room
at the girls who aren't as pretty as
the blonde in the front.

 talking in b-flat
he doesn't walk he bops like jazz.

I like him: laughs in kodachrome
has nothing to do with those uncolors
holding hands — a girl with one green eye
he dances in the halls no real reason
just waiting for the music.

WINGS OF NIGHT

There are original stones
Holding spirits
Just as there are crimson strings
Which loop through us in the high wind.

We have learned to speak
Across the miles
Above the perception of wary cats,
Below the first lights of the sun.

There is to be no real return.
We must circle and circle
To even glimpse from where we came:
It matters not, now.

We were once swept
Into a tremendous flock of crows,
Deep in their purple darkness.
We simply choose not to come back out.

SOUTHERN STYLE

The sky is dripping
Over the struggling trees
And the sun
Impales
Each dessicated leaf

I myself am suffocating
In 98 degree cotton
Tainted cotton
Cotton of forced labor

There is too much red
Red dirt
Red bricks
Fat red faces
Slippery in their private iceboxes
Profiteers of soiled effort

The air's slimy touch
Insinuating
Sucks life.

DOMINO THEORY (or hell in 30 minutes)

evenings
mild when the world
believed the
stately pizzaman
in redwhiteandblue came
far and wee
smiling and
swiftly
making his
free

when the world believed

the queer
little pizzaman
far and wee
poisoned green-luscious carpet

with spilt orange crush
and mammasan's children
with death-sauce and heat

the world
believed
and
the

goat-footed
pizzaMan came
and went
as he pleased

CODEX SACRIFICIALIS

The Most Reverend Francis C. Kelley
Has pronounced judgment upon the Aztecs.
He has written *Blood-Drenched Altars*,
And it has taken up housekeeping
Between *Gringo Rebel* and
The Natalie Wood Collection of
Pre-Colombian Ceramics.
Shelf-life, indeed.

I see Kelley daubing his broom
At a pool of red that keeps running away
To the feet of Chalchihuitlicue

Whose name is Lady Most Precious Jade
And who sings in the codices
Among the stones and sharp sticks
That fall by accident.
Hers is the fifth day
Of the twenty named days
And pain and pleasure taking turns
And things that grow blue and green.

When I was nine I sang to myself
As I danced barefoot in the grass
And stepped on broken glass hidden there.
The Aztecs carved out living hearts
With gold and obsidian,
But I found beer bottles sharp enough.

There was no pain
Only the color of my own blood
Shining on the sidewalk
redder
And with more importance
And with less importance
Than any thing.

ARCHITECTURAL VIEWS

I WINDOWS

Not being a bird in a tree
I go to a window and see
what is there below me.

A pleasure in buildings
is finding what windows frame:
any particular vision.
If fenestration's good
top floor's best: things shape up
differently.

II MIRRORS

One meets one's self at the Ship House:
any corner or wall likely to present
another, distracting when sober. There,
among blurred images I looked for you.

I returned this year. Little was where you'd been
I climbed a spiral stair to a turret
looking for what was left.

Groucho came down the stairs in a night cap
turning into a mirror and back out.
You left the winter, the mirrors were sold;
your image here only in books.
What's out your window, what mirrors me?

CHILOÉ

Cupping clay fingers
The beggar child walks veins
Of dirt roads.
Begging bread and potatoes,
An oily scrap of "empanada."

Wind carries the raven's song
Through arteries,
Perched dark
Over furry bones.
Sweeping clean
Footprints
From the icy gravel.

A coin glows silver,
Against flesh caked
With soil and mucous.
Soup of the sea creatures,
Tomorrow will come.

Facing the dusty labyrinth,
The child turns homeward
My hands resting
On his shoulders;
Offering reassurance
I snap his wishbone neck.

Gently. Lovingly.

AUTO-DA-FÉ

I must have been about eleven,
And tired of all the plastic and glue in the attic.
The musty cobwebs on the Lindberg Line
With their German instructive motors that never worked,
British Airfix whose pieces, an ocean from the factory,
Never fit together. American Auroras were best:
X-15, P-40 Flying Tiger, P-38 Lightning.

I only finished the airplanes — other models were trickery,
Gifts from suitors of my older siblings to keep me quiet:
A Testor-paint bronze anthropoid ape or a
Recondite expensive space station in pre-painted plastics
The giver must have got as a sales premium.
And what of the cars? The body never snapped over the chassis,
Did it? Not even Bond's Aston-Martin with all its imbedded projecting deaths.

So the airplanes lingered, fuselages brooding in their cubbyholes and shelves,
Before woman in her grace began to be slightest of realities,
A whiff of storm on an overcast August day, — still I smelt change,
Stronger than any glue, and grabbed the models
Out onto the asphalt, where I torched them, farmers' matches on lighter fluid.
They smoked and stank, straight boyo celebration,
Black ooze dripped into the potholes
Which held boats of stick in rainier seasons,
All setting me free.

ROADS HOME

In this, the high wind,
No one sleeps.
Some may close their eyes,
But it is only to pretend.

Even the crows
Do not fly in this wind
They sit on frozen branches
Too light for their weight
And stare through the windows
Of the night.

As I shiver under
Strange and varied blankets
I think of your cold feet
And the dark roads home.

The Art of Victor Faccinto

Victor Faccinto, a native of Albany, California, received his undergraduate and graduate training at California State University in Sacramento. In 1974, he moved to New York City, where he has had exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art (New American Filmmakers' Series), the Museum of Modern Art (Cineprobe, 1975), and the Phyllis Kind Gallery (1980, 1982). Faccinto joined the Wake Forest University faculty in 1978; he has served as Gallery Director of the university's Scales Fine Arts Center since the time of his appointment. His most recent award was a North Carolina Visual Artist Fellowship in Painting.

VICTOR FACCINTO



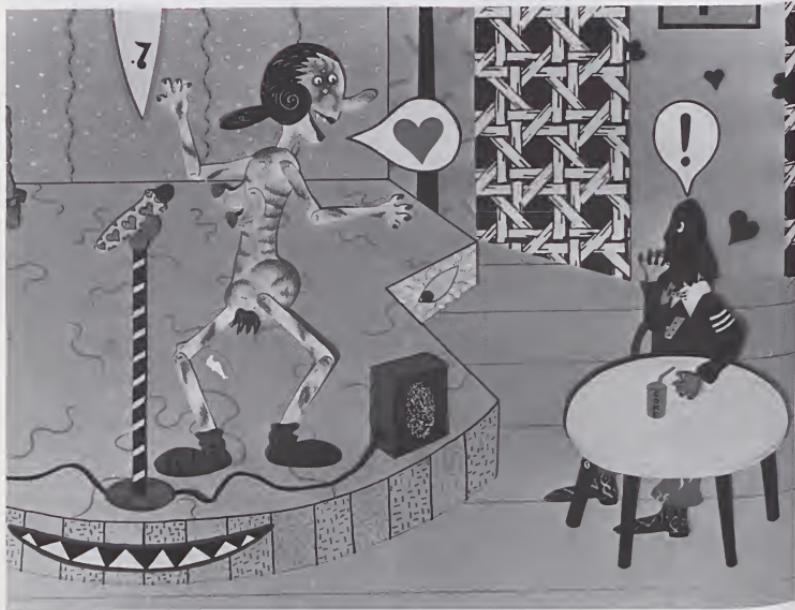
C Snake (1982)
(Acrylic/Wood)

VICTOR FACCINTO



Still from "Book of Dead" (1978)
(16mm animated film)

VICTOR FACCINTO

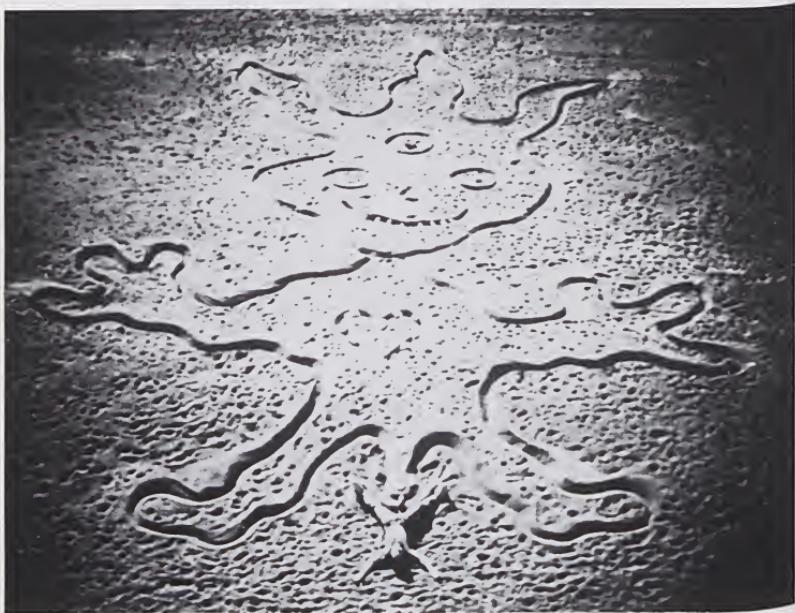


Still from "Filet of Soul" (1972)
(16 mm animated film)



Her Friends (1981)

VICTOR FACCINTO



Still from "Mr. Sandman" (1970)
(16 mm animated film)



Detail from "Red Raga" (1982)
(Acrylic/Wood)

VICTOR FACCINTO



Snake Woman (1979)
(Collage)



Still from "Book of Dead" (1978)
(16 mm animated film)

Fiction

BEYOND THE WALLS

The swivel locks creaked at precise, predictable intervals. Oarblades ripped into the water again and the bracings at his feet creaked as Alec approached the front stop, the nose of his one-man well out of water. Alec paused for an instant before beginning the slide. He noted mentally that this would be the fortieth slide and would carry the nose to within eight or so feet of the Campanile isle, into the shadow of the bell tower shooting diagonally and nearly horizontally across the lake at this time of morning. He began the pull — back stooping and slowly uncoiling, feet straining against the leather straps, body balanced between the knees; the triangular riggings on either side bent just slightly with the force. Alec had once calculated this bending to be an angle of 1.06 deviation from the straight-plane norm, and even now, despite all Coach Wheeler's admonitions, he turned his head to watch the right oar in the water. It remained stationary, all the force translating at the rowlocks and his own wrists into motion. Alec thought it was a shame Newton never rowed as a teenager; he would doubtless have discovered the action-reaction principle years earlier.

After carefully bringing the sculling boat about in the quiet, shimmering water, he began back across the lake, noting the absence of any westerly gale from the larger lake. Beads of perspiration ran from the sides of his jaws into the towel which he tucked into his sweatshirt on mornings below forty degrees. As the swivel pins set once again into their interval creakings, Alec became aware that this morning, for the first time, there was no "slogging," as Coach called it, between his slide and pull, and no lateral swerve in his hips. There was a pivoting of his principal joints that was even, harmonious, continuous; he had, it seemed, conquered the technique at last. And now he was aware of something vaguely disturbing behind it — the power with which he rowed. He realized, suddenly, that his leg muscles coiled mightily, and that his shoulders and arms contracted, exerting power drawn from a deep source of strength somewhere inside him — he had always known this, just never explicitly noticed before. His breath steamed out at a perfect tattoo rhythm, and he watched his hands on the oars. They were large, strong hands; he had always been proud of them. But now, layered with protruding veins and sinew, they seemed almost brutal looking. It was then that he remembered where he had to go today. His breathing was no longer even and he let the oars rest on the sills of the oarlocks; the boat drifted. He no longer felt like rowing.

Alec ate breakfast with Brad Fischer, who had been waiting for him on the tiny quay at the edge of the lake. Brad swam with Alec during swimming season, and since Alec had already been selected captain of the crew, Brad was the sure bet for swim team captain. He had tried rowing as a second-termer, when he was fourteen, but, as Coach Wheeler had put it, Brad was an individualist and in an eight-man shell that meant rowing in tandem, not in echelon. He looked with piercing brown eyes over his orange juice at Alec.

"You pulled up about a hundred yards short out there. How come? It looked like you were going great."

"Oh. Well, oh that. Yes, Brad, my God I got one helluva cramp in my calf out there. Looked like a softball, it was so knotted up."

Brad watched him devour his toast and gulp at his hot chocolate. "Hmm," he remarked. "Well, what's up this afternoon? Got anything going before practice? Because if not, I'm having a bitch of a time with that last calculus problem."

"Well, no, as a matter of fact I'll be missing afternoon practice today, as a matter of fact. But —"

"Really, where're you headed?"

Brad, Alec noted, had a way of following along on the heels of vital words that was sometimes altogether unpleasant.

"Visit family."

Brad paused. He had roomed with Alec when they were both second-termers, before he had decided boarding life wasn't for him and moved back home to Downer's Grove after only six months. But, day student or not, he was a top student and he had gotten to know Alec pretty well.

"I thought they were in Florida," was all he said.

Alec put his empty cup on the saucer. "Other family." He reached to the chair beside him and wrapped the towel back around his neck and pulled on a woolen stocking cap.

"Hmm. I was thinking about picking up a scarf at Thalheimer's. Mind if I go along — just for the ride?"

"Well, they're in the city."

"Heading into Chicago on a Tuesday?"

Alec glanced up at Brad, whose pupils seemed to be widening simultaneously with his eyelids.

"Yes. Say, look, I have to dress and all, could you excuse me?" He left hurriedly, stumbling over his chair.

At half-past three, after having showered, dressed, and worked out the three vector problems assigned for physics, Alec crossed the rose garden, now quite dead, passed the meeting house, and rounded Manly Hall, where he stopped to peer into Scott Walton's window. Inside sat Scott and Jeff Hunt, kings of the hard-drug users at Francis W. Parker School, passing a reefer to and fro, in the process of ruining, for the fourth time in three months, Scott's new stereo.

Alec moved on, feeling the biting October air in his nostrils, thinking how glad he was he'd quit smoking pot. Ahead, just beyond the soccer field and the line of trees beyond that, the red bricking of the school's wall came into view. That wall, Alec felt, was the very heart of the Parker School. It always inspired in him the sorts of thoughts he knew would take him far some day. He listened to the click of his heels as he strode strongly, was glad for the thick cashmere socks warming his ankles, and held out his hands to observe them: large, clean, strong fingernails, neatly trimmed. The hands of a scholar, a gentleman.

Yes, he thought, my lungs are pure. And next year he was certain to go on to crew for the University of Penn, or south to swim for Duke or Furman. Perhaps he'd take his junior year and go to U.C.L.A. before graduating in order to experience those girls he had heard so many stories and seen so many pictures of. The last girl he had dated was bound for Arizona State, and she was FAST. Now, the thought of their date two weekends ago troubled Alec — or rather, not the date, but the sex afterwards. He had, even despite his supposed physical conditioning, been surprised. *She* had been surprised. He had crushed her, pinioned her into the mattress of the bunk in his room. Five, finally

six times that night. On the sixth she had been unwilling, but he was somehow unable to stop. This frightened him the next morning, and throughout a very disquieting week he threw himself into his calculus with more zeal than even Hekman's course deserved.

Calculus. Now *there's* the way to think. He comforted himself with the preempting thought that at exactly eight forty-five tonight, no later, he'd be back in his room, alone at the wooden desk beneath his light. Fingertips of one hand against his forehead, fingertips of the other sliding carefully down the pages. Absorbing, sorting, associating, tying up loose ends, forming thoughts that are clear, organized. He would major in a technical field next year.

"Yup," he muttered aloud, "when you use the Haversine formula on a quadratic equation, you get the angle for a plane triangle; the answer is always there, black and white, logical, definite." He looked out over the watery sunshine reflecting on the lake past the commons. Parker School's own self-contained lake. And when you're inside the walls of Parker, he said to himself, you don't have to confront your father's erratic and maniac family on the outside. With them, *nothing* is definite except violence and poverty.

He was at the gate. The formidable iron-wrought gate, painted in black and all the black peeling with age; he waited just outside for the taxi. Father's family. Uncle Joe, now freshly out of prison; Uncle Cal, with the scar running across his face, blind in one eye, who let cigars drop their ashes into his plate while he ate; cousin Randy, three years older than Alec, who had taunted him as a child into a game of body-punching and then proceeded to split open Alec's lip. And the others. And the house!

But Aunt Judy had died. "Go and put in a decent appearance, son. Your mother's caught up in her clinic, so I, we, can't make it. And they are blood relatives . . ." Where the hell is that taxi, he thought, and hugged himself in his navy Parker School sweater. Why me? — because you're the only member of our family in Chicago right now . . . just go and pay your respects to Grandmother and the others and go to the funeral . . ." He hadn't gone to the funeral; he drew the line there.

"Jesus, *where* is that taxi?"

He turned toward the school, resolving to march back to his room if the taxi didn't appear in the next five minutes. He looked at the "Parker Column" beside the gate. It was built into the rest of the wall, but rose higher and was made of granite brick. On it was a bronzed plate with the school insignia — the same that was on his sweater — and an inscription reading, "Francis W. Parker A Secondary School Dedicated to the Development of Each Young Man's Maximum Potential. Founded 1919." On top of the column was a figure which looked vaguely like a horse's head. It was now weathered and chondritic, but it looked as if it might originally have been carved out of white marble. Alec was reminded of the knight piece of Headmaster Geer's chess set the day he'd been invited to Geer's house for a game and a chat last spring. The headmaster had praised his mathematical precision at chess. "So you want to study engineering? Well, it's a fine field." He had looked gruffly across the table at Alec for a moment. "But if I might venture some advice, be sure not to give your physical side short shrift." Alec had looked up from his beer and was about to mention that he took athletics as a science, that technique was the important consideration. "Your athletic endeavors here at Parker have been rather salient, and Mr. Wheeler has commented more than once on some extraordinary, well, umm, *passion* as he calls it, you have for exerting physical strength. Well, be that as it may, no one will gainsay athletics can take a man far in college."

His comments had somehow disturbed Alec, and they unsettled him now, as the awareness of something incapable of rationalization always did.

"Jesus, where the *fuck* is that taxi!" Then he saw the cab coming down the hill, but not before his wording surprised him. He rarely ever swore.

The taxi left him at the doorstep of a squat, aluminum-sided house in East Chicago — south of the river and just next to the steel mills of Gary, Indiana. There was no color anywhere around the box-like structure, the front stoop was rotted, and as Alec stepped onto the abbreviated porch, he saw that the aluminum siding had eroded to gray with the wind from Lake Michigan. Slats of it flapped free here and there. The dismantled parts of a motorcycle reared at him as he leaned across to knock on the door. When he did so, the old diffidence took him, and his breathing quickened and his hands twitched in his pockets. An icy gale blasted his longish hair across his face and pierced through his Parker School sweater.

At last the door opened. It was his Uncle Joe, looking at him intensely from under bushy eyebrows.

"Get the hell in here before you freeze your ass off." Alec followed him in through a living room which took two strides to cross into the dining area which was crowded by a disproportionately large table, and Branham's. The room was bathed in a dirty yellow glow by the ebbing sun outside the windows; a gas heater hissed noisily on the floor. His grandmother got up and walked over to pull a chair to the table for him. She was a thin, vivacious-looking woman with protruding teeth and dyed-blond hair. Alec always found it hard to believe there was any connection or semblance between them, but sometimes something in her eye when she looked at him convinced him otherwise. He felt awkward and restless, seated at a table covered with recently-used tumblers and plates that hadn't been cleared away. On the wall opposite him was a small, framed depiction of Christ pulling His robe back to reveal a glowing heart, pierced with thorns, bleeding droplets from the wounds.

"Goddamn, you didn't even wear a coat," said Randy from across the table. "Don't they teach you anything at that fancy-shmancy school?"

Alec expected this. Resentment towards his father. "The sun was pretty strong when I left," he said evenly. "I didn't think I'd need one."

"Want something to eat?" Aunt Helen said grudgingly, from the kitchen.

"No. Thanks. I'm, uh, very sorry about Aunt Judy. I'll miss her —"

Something in the way that Randy and his other cousin, Danny, were looking at him made him stop, somewhat confused. He *had* loved Judy. She gave him her used boxing novels when he was a child. It was, although he never practiced it, the one thing he had in common with this family — their love for boxing. She had, in her own way, seemingly tried to bring him closer. He knew she died here, in the dark narrow room with the stained walls behind the kitchen.

Because she had been divorced, the church wouldn't allow her to be buried in the cemetery with the pious and wealthy church members — until his father in a furious gesture sent seven thousand dollars for a "decent" plot. She was buried beside Hallard Daalman, the man who had built St. Paul, beneath a white marble headstone.

"It was very sudden," Alec managed.

"Yeah. Sudden." Uncle Cal was seated at Alec's right. His cigar burnt close to his lips and Alec was afraid it might burn the skin without his knowing it. Cal had been hit in the head with a grappling hook on the docks before he was married. Now the nerves on that side of his face were numbed. He drank from a milk glass filled with straight whiskey and then refilled it from a half-gallon bottle on the table. It was his wife who had died.

"Yeah. Sudden." Randy paused. "So goddamn *sudden*."

Randy turned his head and simulated spitting on the floor. Alec tried to choose not to notice this, as he would have done at school, but the realization that Randy was drunk unnerved him a little. Everyone sat tensely silent for a while. Then Aunt Helen walked in and grabbed the half-gallon bottle from the table. Uncle Cal reached out and held her wrist.

"Not yet, you don't," he thumbed at Alec. "The kid. The kid needs one. He's family, he needs one."

Aunt Helen silently pulled free and took the bottle to the kitchen. Cal pushed his glass in front of Alec and then put his head on his arms and was silent.

"Hell, the kid won't drink it," said Joe, looking away.

"Not *man* enough," Randy said.

"Randy," his wife, Karen, put in. She looked, Alec thought, just like the girls who visited Parker from St. Katherine's in Nauvoo. Pale, sensitive face, thin body, and somehow desirable. The kind that always made his heart break just to look at. Poor girl, Alec thought, trapped by the Branham good looks. Randy was tall, gaunt, and had a wiry build that came with stacking crates on the docks. But he had the Branham looks. They all did.

"Not man enough to even come to the funeral after the *sudden* death."

Alec took a drink from the glass.

"An' your father thinks he can wash us off his hands just like that. 'Send *money* and ignore 'em.'"

"That's not the way it is. Not at all." Alec kept his voice even. He was sure that he could reason with them, explain to them.

"— fuck it's not. But you, I'll tell you, he can't escape who he is no matter how much oil he distributes. He's one of us. Joe's *brother*, goddammit. Can't escape it."

Alec felt immolated. He wanted to deny this, but didn't want to cause excitement.

"That's right," Joe said. "The son of a bitch broke a dresser drawer over my head once. Knocked me out cold. He's no different."

"Look," Alec maintained control of his voice with effort, "don't let's talk about my —"

"And shit," Joe interrupted, "he was raised in the same house as us. Same mother." Joe stared at Alec for a moment, letting that sink in.

Alec was at a loss; he noticed that the usual contrapuntal commentary which ran in his head during conversations was gone. He stared at his glass and tried to order his thoughts by remembering the formula for the volume of a cylinder. He couldn't.

"And you. Pretty-boy Alec. His golden boy. All pretty clothes and *smart*. Smart Alec. Smartalec." Randy leered at him.

Karen looked away with a pained expression. Alec held onto his glass like an anchor. He suddenly noticed everyone's hands on the table — they were all large, sinewy. His stomach felt as if it were opening to receive the blood that now drained from upper extremities.

"Hell, he would never'a made it to Northwestern if not for football. Pure luck of the draw," Joe said.

"You're wrong. He worked hard. He was smarter and worked harder —"

"Bullshit he was smarter! He was just luckier and had a chance, but he's still one of us. And *you*, you're no different neither."

"Take it easy, Randy." Cousin Danny finally butted in. A smirk ran across his face.

"And hell, I remember that time when me and him went across the river. He was with three in the same —"

"You're fucking wrong."

"What?"

"Son of a bitch."

Alec was aware only of a pressure against his thighs and then of glass objects smacking and exploding against the far wall. The shards sprinkled over Randy, who had struggled to his feet. Alec leaned his hips and shoulders behind the blow. Randy threw up an arm, but too late. His head shot back and he hit hard against the wall behind. Alec closed and hit again. Randy's face snapped to one side, blood shot across his forehead and onto the wall. On the recoil he tried to grapple but only managed to clutch Alec's sweater and, as Alec shifted to one side, he fell forward, still clutching, ripping the sweater. Alec's movements came without thought, swiftly. He grabbed Randy's shirtfront, back muscles coiling, and threw him like a crate back against the wall, slightly off the ground. In a fluid motion Alec held him there with one hand while drawing the other back, but Danny caught his hand in the crook of his arm before he could hit again.

For a moment Alec did not recognize what had happened. Then, he looked across the room and saw his grandmother, standing like some broken angel, beckoning him, seducing him. The floor seemed to go out beneath him. Greyish shadows formed at the outer edges of his vision and began moving inward, exploding at sudden periods into blinding brightness. He felt weightless, unbalanced, inchoate. His thoughts spun like chariot spokes about the sights he last remembered seeing. Suddenly, he was back, Danny's arm embracing his.

Karen looked imploringly at him. The others bent over Randy. Tears clouded up Alec's eyes; Danny spoke softly into his ear. He looked up and saw they did not hate him, and, finally, he left the tears rolling down his face, and breathed.

Darkness had crowded out all but a very faint glow of twilight when Alec got back to school. Tree branches overhanging the wall moved darkly in the mist, clutching and surrounding one another. They had frightened him as a first-termer. Now he stood alone in front of Parker Column, shivering slightly without his sweater, but not minding the cold, or the drizzle. He wiped his forearm across his face and looked up at the old marble horse's head silhouetted against the day's last light. Old and weathered, Alec thought, but the hands that chiseled it, a long time ago, were driven by a passion to accomplish something. And he realized that passion in himself now. The deep will of his strength, the drive

of his mind. Ineffable, inexorable. He couldn't calculate or understand it, but he could no more have refused it than have rejected the color of his eyes, all along. And how different, really, he thought, were the hands of a stonemason from hands that moved marbled chess pieces across ivory boards? The source is the same.

He looked down at the torn, blood-spotted sweater he cradled in his left arm. Then, hugging it close to his chest like a lover, he walked past the gate toward the floodlights of Manly Hall. He would wear the sweater in the racing shell tomorrow morning at six.

Photography



Sliding

WILL ROBERTSON



Portrait



Dockside



Load of Hay



Weatherface

PHIL DENFELD



Detroit Decay



Cowboy

JAMES CRNKOVICH

James Crnkovich likes to photograph objects and people in St. Paul, Minnesota, his home, and many other more transient sites. "No ideas but in photos," he silently cries: like many artists, he won't talk about his work, a corpus of great variety and grace. He actually moved from film to still black and white photography. Some of his wildly experimental films, occasionally featuring unlikely actors such as Buckminster Fuller and Hubert Humphrey, have been transferred to videocassette. James left Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, in the mid-seventies for the more culturally active life of the twin cities. He has also travelled extensively and cheaply by rail in his embrace of these states. Jim is the sort of person who consistently receives unsolicited conspiracy theory literature on the streets, a true Baryshnikov of the Boho Dance. For further information, contact him at 300 East 4th Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101. — R. M.



Billy Goat's



Wedding Cake Figurines

JAMES CRNKOVICH



Sailboat on Lake Michigan



Chicago During Peace Time



St. Paul, Alley at Dawn



Marina's Son with Fish

JAMES CRNKOVICH



Robot World



Pollywog Ben



Portrait, Robert Mielke

Eric Oxendorf's photography relates "man to nature, as well as man to man, to create a statement that is significant to both and conveys a social, moral, or ecological idea," while enhancing "quietness, sensitivity, solidarity, and a feeling of inner peace" in the viewer. Technically, his work leaves little to chance: as a piece like "Georgia State Capitol" amply demonstrates, he does not subscribe to shooting a lot and then editing toward the photos which happened to work out. The forming imagination behind these images seems to know exactly what it wishes to embody in the realized print, a "classic" Apollonian approach to the art which yields undeniably striking results. A Milwaukee native, Eric has worked with such photographers as Ansel Adams, Arthur Lazar, Ruth Bernard, and JoAnn Calis. His clients as a commercial photographer have included AT&T, Bob Hope, Willie Nelson, McDonalds, Xerox, Warner Communications, the U. S. Department of the Interior, and the U. S. Navy (which he served in during the Vietnam War). He has had one man shows in Milwaukee, Chicago, and Honolulu, among other places, and was part of the Vietnam Veterans Art Group National Exhibit in Chicago and Washington, 1982. His photographs have received over 70 awards. Much of his work is in color, which we cannot reproduce here. For further information: Eric Oxendorf Photography, P. O. Box 10304, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53210. — R. M.



Door Detail (1979)



Industry (1978)



Georgia State Capitol (1983)

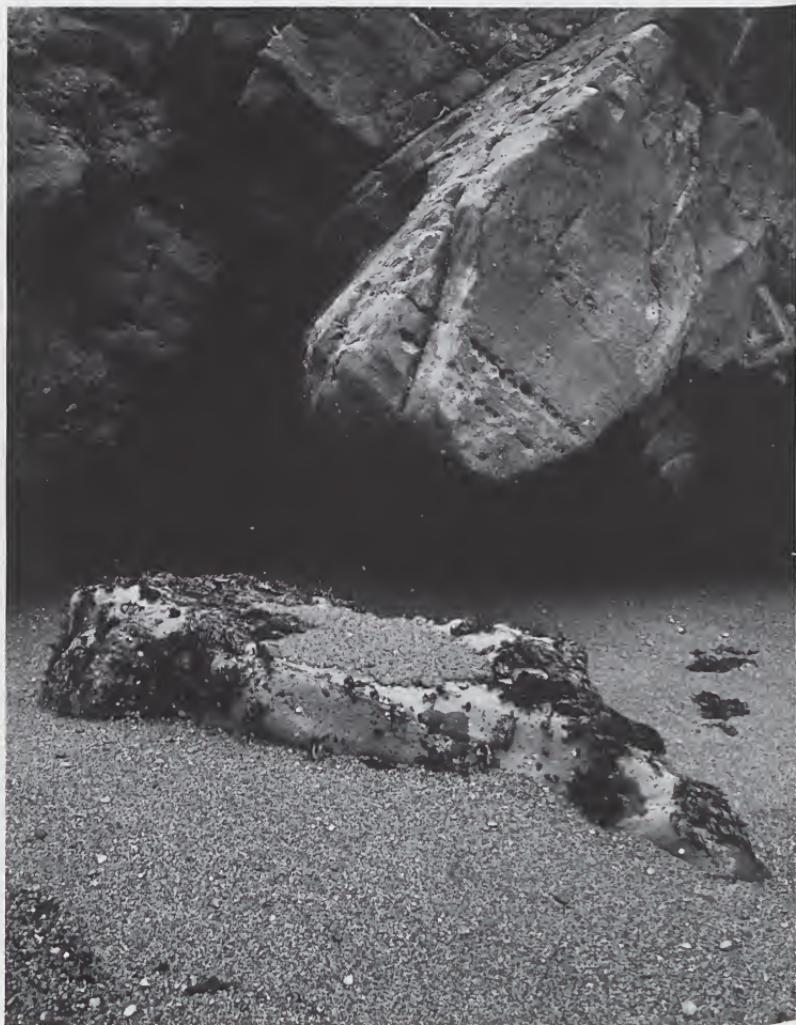
ERIC OXENDORF



Shy Clyde (1980)



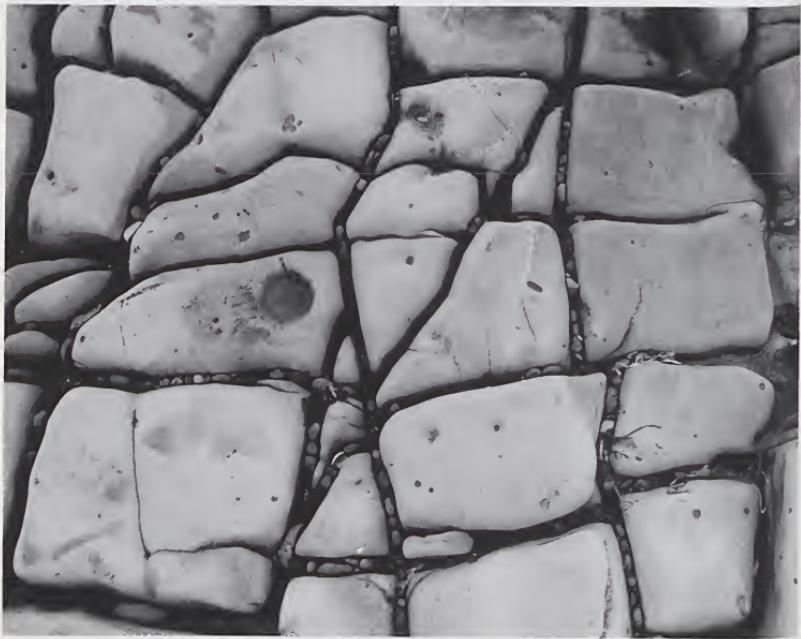
Untitled Tree
(Glacier National Park, 1982)



Tidal Cave (1983)



Tidal Pool (1983)



Rocks — Weston Beach, California (1983)

